

**Coordination Processes and Outcomes in Norway
and New Zealand: The Challenge of Inter-
Organizational Coordination of Food Safety Issues**

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1. Food safety coordination in Norway and New Zealand

1.1 Introduction

This dissertation discusses the *effects* of food safety reforms on inter-organizational coordination processes and outcomes in the food safety context in Norway and New Zealand. Both countries have in recent years implemented comprehensive food safety reforms, which have had implications for inter-organizational structures and cultures. These inter-organizational structures and cultures affect how coordination processes operate within such structures and cultures. Ensuring the achievement of outcomes common to multiple organizations often requires inter-organizational coordination processes. Therefore, this dissertation focuses on such inter-organizational coordination processes. Still, it does not focus on external outcomes, such as the degree of food safety in a society.

However, such coordination processes often prove more difficult to achieve than intra-organizational coordination processes, as organizational boundaries need to be crossed. The research of Egeberg (2003) suggests that organizational boundaries represent obstacles to communication, and that communication is easier to achieve within organizations than between them. Food safety issues in particular frequently span several policy fields, and so require inter-organizational coordination to reduce inter-organizational fragmentation. Such fragmentation appears a significant challenge in many countries. According to Beuselinck (2008), coordination generally seems to be a great challenge in several policy fields within the public sector.

Food policy may cover, for example, food security (having enough food), food safety (that food is safe to eat and that food has good quality) and healthy food (the question of how

healthy or unhealthy food really is). This dissertation focuses on food safety; the ‘aspects of food hygiene that contribute to the production, processing, distribution, storage and sale of safe food’ (NZFSA 2007c, p. 45). Political and administrative leaders need to pay attention to such issues to ensure that citizens consume safe food. Accordingly, the safety of food sold in a country will always require much attention.

In addition to food safety, New Zealand focuses on biosecurity; ‘exclusion, eradication or effective management of the risks posed by pests and diseases or unwanted organisms to the economy, environment and human health’ (NZFSA 2007c, p. 45). New Zealand concentrates on biosecurity issues by having strict control of its borders. Biosecurity can also determine the degree of food safety, for example when foreign species may have a negative impact on the safety of foodstuffs.

Political and administrative leaders implement reforms to accomplish important goals, for example strong food safety in a country. Such reforms may lead to accomplishment of goals. Still, they do not necessarily do so, because reforms often have unintended effects (Pierson 2000, p. 483). Moreover, changes may occur without reforms, and such changes often occur incrementally. In addition, the accumulation of many incremental changes can easily lead, over time, to radical changes. Analytically, it is therefore ‘important to distinguish between reform and change’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, pp. 122–123).

Studying reforms requires a definition. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004, p. 8) define reforms as ‘*deliberate changes to the structures and processes of public sector organizations with the objective of getting them (in some sense) to run better*’. The final part of the definition, ‘*to run better*’, indicates that reforms frequently have positive aspects, such as cost efficiency, greater coordination, better goal achievement or more democratic processes. Therefore, the definition envisages many different kinds of efforts. Political and

administrative leaders frequently implement reforms to eliminate a problem, which could 'be defined as a perceived distance between a desired and an actual state of affairs' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 22). Foss Hansen (2005, p. 325) states that reforms may introduce structural and procedural changes, but also cultural changes may be important in reforms.

Nevertheless, there are various opinions about the meaning of '*to run better*', and there is disagreement about both means and ends. Christensen *et al.* (2007a, p. 122) define reforms as 'active and deliberate attempts by political and administrative leaders to change structural and cultural features of organizations; change is what actually happens to such features'. This definition does not include '*to run better*', and has a more neutral character than the definition presented by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004). Still, leaders frequently implement reforms to make something 'run better'.

In Norway's case, the food safety reform was implemented in 2004, a year which saw the establishment of the Norwegian Food Safety Authority (NFSA), the passing of a new Food Act, and the reallocation of the relevant ministerial responsibilities. Moreover, politicians established the Scientific Committee to handle risk assessments (Asdal 2005). The NFSA is affiliated with three ministries concerned with food: the Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs (MFCA), the Ministry of Health and Care Services (MHCS) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF). One of these, the MAF, has administrative responsibility for the NFSA.

In New Zealand, the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) shared responsibility for food safety issues until 2002. In 2002, political and administrative leaders established the New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA) as a semi-autonomous body attached to the MAF. The food safety issues were detached from the MoH. In 2007, the leaders separated the NZFSA from the MAF and made it a separate ministry (a stand-alone public service department) (NZFSA 2007a; NZFSA 2007b; NZFSA

2007c). In July 2010, the NZFSA and the MAF were merged to a single organization, a ministry; the MAF. The reforms implemented in New Zealand illustrate much organizational variety. 'Changing the structures of ministries by splitting up, merging or transferring tasks across policy fields may be part of public-sector reforms' (Foss Hansen 2005, p. 325).

Therefore, Norway and New Zealand have implemented various structures in the organization of food safety issues, which illustrates that countries select different organizational structures depending on historical traditions and variation in policy challenges. Historical traditions are important because they vary between countries, and also affect present and future decision-making due to path dependency. Moreover, countries select different organizational structures, because they face diverse challenges that call for a range of responses. Accordingly, a comparison of food safety reforms in Norway and New Zealand has the potential to generate more knowledge about the reasons for reforms in different countries, as well as the effects of such reforms. However, this dissertation will only focus on the *effects* of reforms and not on the *reasons* for them. Nevertheless, the reasons for implementing reforms may be important for analyzing effects. When reforms are implemented in a policy sector only a short time after an earlier set of reforms, the unexpected effects of a given reform may easily trigger a new reform. In addition, knowledge about reasons for reforms may provide valuable information about the context of a policy field. Therefore, even though this dissertation focuses on effects, knowledge about the reasons may increase the contextual understanding of the effects.

Leaders implement reforms for various reasons (Vos and Wendler 2006). *First*, lack of inter-organizational coordination has led to reforms in some countries. The issue of inter-organizational coordination attracts much attention from politicians and public administrators, because such coordination is vital to the achievement of goals. Several countries, including New Zealand, the UK, France, Ireland, Germany and Norway have

implemented reforms to address inter-organizational fragmentation and lack of inter-organizational coordination in the field of food safety. The issues in this field are frequently cross-cutting, i.e. straddle several policy fields, and therefore require inter-organizational coordination (For an overview of the differences between countries, see Taylor and Millar 2004; Ansell and Vogel 2006; Borraz *et al.* 2006; Rothstein 2006; Steiner 2006; NZFSA 2007a; NZFSA 2007b).

Second, food safety crises often lead to reforms as they frequently attract the attention of political and administrative leaders, who put the issues on the agenda (Ansell and Vogel 2006). The instrumental-hierarchical perspective states that crises frequently reveal weaknesses in the organizational structure, because they test the capacity of the system to handle complex issues. According to this theoretical perspective, reforms are then implemented by political and administrative leaders to eliminate such weaknesses and as an instrument for achieving desired goals. However, ‘best’ organizational structures will be difficult to find, because such structures always need to be adapted to different cultures and challenges, according to an institutional-cultural perspective. The institutional-cultural perspective suggests that organizational features change gradually over time. Crises, however, are ‘critical junctures’, at which leaders make radical changes (Hogan 2000; Christensen *et al.* 2007a). ‘Changes are characterized as gradual adaptations centring around a state of equilibrium, punctuated by abrupt and powerful upheavals, and then followed by a new phase of small changes centred around a new state of equilibrium’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, pp. 134–135).

Reforms in Norway and New Zealand have been implemented not as a result of food safety crises, but in order to prepare for future challenges, and to deliver better decisions and services to protect consumers. The instrumental-hierarchical perspective suggests that political and administrative leaders need to have the capacity to handle such challenges, and

reforms can sometimes increase that capacity. Being proactive rather than reactive helps leaders to reduce the chances of a food safety crisis occurring. Measures include boosting organizational capacity to handle food safety crises if they occur, and to prevent them occurring in the first place. Still, Norway experienced a food safety crisis in 2006, two years after the food safety reform was implemented, and the NFSA made some structural changes in 2007 (although these were not comprehensive enough to be called a reform). They were, however, important in relation to ensuring greater organizational coordination *within* the NFSA, particularly through the link between the head office and the regional office.

Third, vulnerable countries may implement reforms to reduce the risk of a food safety crisis occurring. Some countries are more vulnerable than others to damage by pests, diseases and non-native species. In particular, New Zealand is more vulnerable than Norway, due to being geographically more isolated. In addition, non-native species, pests and diseases can have a negative impact on the food exports on which the economy depends. New Zealand is also home to very special species of plants and animals, which are vulnerable to damage. New Zealand's vulnerability was a good reason for leaders to establish a separate ministry to deal with food safety issues. Policy fields that involve great risk may require increased political attention to deal with such issues. The institutional-myth perspective suggests that presenting New Zealand as a safe country may be important for satisfying consumers.

Fourth, reforms can be triggered by organizational conflicts about food safety issues (Alemanno 2006). According to the instrumental-negotiation perspective, state-sector organizations always operate in political contexts characterized by diverging interests and scarce resources (Bolman and Deal 2007). 'All governance is to a lesser or greater extent contested in the sense that policy actors pursue different interests and take different positions on policy outcomes' (Ansell and Vogel 2006, p. 10). Therefore, conflicts characterize the

political context. However, some conflicts are more fundamental than others, challenging which actors should make decisions, which institutions should be responsible for such decisions, which considerations should govern those decisions, and which procedures should regulate decision-making (Ansell and Vogel 2006, pp. 10–11).

The organizational affiliations of food safety have been debated in various countries (Ansell and Vogel 2006). In particular, many countries have experienced conflicts between the ministry of health and the ministry of agriculture over food safety issues. Concerns have often been raised when a ministry of agriculture has been tasked both with promoting business interests and with ensuring food safety, and these two tasks could come into conflict. Compared to a ministry of agriculture, a ministry of health rarely takes commercial issues into account (however, one exception may be hospitals). In the UK, for example, the health versus agriculture debate became an issue after the BSE crisis in the 1990s (Elvbakken *et al.* 2008; Rykkja 2008a; Rykkja 2008b).

In the 1990s, various actors in Norway, including ministries and a public committee (NOU 1996:10), discussed the organizational affiliations of food safety issues, due to the perceived clash with agricultural interests. However, these issues were not ‘contested’ *after* the implementation of the food safety reform in 2004. It is therefore clear that if leaders manage to find effective structures, reforms tend to reduce conflicts between central actors, such as ministries. Reforms may however encounter cultural resistance, according to an institutional-cultural perspective, if actors’ interests are linked to the existing organizational structure, and this is threatened by the reforms. Not only may reforms fail to solve all of the problems an organization experiences, they may even create new ones.

Fifth, the need to adapt to European and international standards sometimes stimulates reforms, as reforms may ease inter-organizational coordination between national and EU institutions (Vos and Wendler 2006). The EU has implemented various structural changes to

ensure a stronger focus on food safety issues following the BSE crisis. In addition, several member states have implemented reforms to boost interaction between their central governments and the EU institutions.

1.2 Research questions, categorization and design

Coordination has several complex features, which makes it a difficult concept to define. However, it makes sense to define the concept of coordination both as a process and as an outcome (Jacobsen 1993). Coordination can operate both within an organization (*intra-organizational* coordination) and between organizations (*inter-organizational* coordination). This dissertation focuses on *inter-organizational* coordination, because it involves organizations that establish decision-making rules, discuss policy, share information, adjust mutually and make decisions (Whetten 1982; Jacobsen 1993; Douma and Screuder 2002; State Services Commission 2008).

Norway and New Zealand have selected different organizational structures to food safety issues, making it important to study these two countries. Therefore, using variation in the *independent* variable as a selection criterion represents a useful strategy, matching the diverse-cases method (Gerring 2007, pp. 97–98). The research questions should be linked to the dependent and independent variables. Independent variables may contribute to variation in the dependent variable.

Reforms that involve several organizations may lead to changes in inter-organizational structures and inter-organizational cultures. Formal inter-organizational coordination processes operate within formal inter-organizational structures, whereas informal inter-organizational coordination processes are more or less independent of such structures. Changes in these inter-organizational structures and cultures may lead to changes in actual inter-organizational processes. Relevant factors in such processes include the

division of labour between organizations, regular meetings, the nature of the goals involved, active leadership/lead organization, attitudes and trust, the geographical distance between relevant organizations, and how many organizations are involved. These factors will be discussed further in chapter two.

The outcome of a change in such inter-organizational processes may be weak, medium or strong coordination. Each relevant factor may contribute to the outcome; strong coordination. However, a combination of several positive factors may increase the chances of this particular outcome; a clear division of labour, meeting arenas, clear and lack of conflicting goals, active leadership/lead organization, positive attitudes and trust, a short geographical distance/relevant IT systems for coordination and a low number of organizations involved in such processes. Therefore, the intermediate variables in this dissertation are actual inter-organizational coordination processes and the dependent variable is the outcome of those inter-organizational processes.

In qualitative studies, the use of too many outcome categories will quickly make it difficult to measure an empirical phenomenon, since quantitative measurement in qualitative studies always is problematic. The three outcome categories used in this dissertation are intended to link *inter-organizational* and *intra-organizational* coordination. *Strong* coordination signifies that decisions made in inter-organizational coordination processes influence decisions made in intra-organizational processes. By contrast, *weak* coordination signifies that decisions made in inter-organizational processes do not influence decisions made in intra-organizational processes. *Medium* coordination signifies that while some decisions made in inter-organizational processes do influence intra-organizational processes, others do not. Several dimensions will be analyzed further in chapter two, such as horizontal versus vertical inter-organizational coordination, informal versus formal inter-organizational coordination, and internal versus external inter-organizational coordination.

The first two research questions cover general reform trends in Norway and New Zealand. *First*, what are the general reform trends in Norway's central administration, and what, according to the four theoretical perspectives, are their effects? *Second*, what are the general reform trends in the state sector in New Zealand, and what, according to the four theoretical perspectives, are their effects? The answers to these questions will provide insights into the general reform pictures of these two countries, and ensure that the food safety reforms are contextualized. Studying context is always important in case studies (Nash *et al.* 2006).

The other questions cover inter-organizational coordination of food safety issues in the two countries, but do not involve a comparative perspective: *Third*, how has the Norwegian food safety reform implemented in 2004 affected the formal and actual horizontal inter-organizational structure and culture, and the inter-organizational coordination processes between the MAF, the MFCA and the MHCS? *Fourth*, do these ministries in Norway have an integrated coordination framework, or do they operate independently? *Fifth*, how has the Norwegian food safety reform affected the vertical inter-organizational coordination structure and culture, and then the coordination processes between these three ministries and the NFSA? If they operate independently, such independence may challenge coordination. *Sixth*, how have the food safety reforms implemented in New Zealand in 2002 and 2007 affected the vertical and horizontal inter-organizational structures and cultures, and then the coordination processes between the NZFSA, the MoH and the MAF? *Seventh*, what are the outcomes on coordination of these horizontal and vertical inter-organizational coordination processes in Norway and New Zealand?

The next research question revolves around the comparative aspect of this dissertation and possible explanations for similarities and differences: *Eight*, how can the

theoretical perspectives explain the differences and similarities between these two countries? The final question deals with the scope for generalization to other cases and countries: Nine how do the food safety reforms in Norway and New Zealand compare to reforms in other policy fields in these two and other countries?

1.2 Theoretical perspectives on coordination

Roness (2009) distinguishes between several theoretical strategies: ‘prioritizing’, ‘complementing’, ‘contrasting’ and ‘synthesizing’. This dissertation employs ‘contrasting’ as its primary strategy. ‘The core of this strategy is to choose among alternative theories based on assessments of their explanatory power’ (Roness 2009, p. 52).

This dissertation’s theoretical framework is based on four theoretical perspectives: an instrumental-hierarchical perspective, an instrumental-negotiation perspective, an institutional-cultural perspective, and an institutional-myth perspective. These theoretical perspectives provide insights into the working and potential outcomes of inter-organizational coordination processes. These perspectives also offer different perspectives on the links between the dependent and independent variables. They should therefore be useful in explaining inter-organizational coordination processes, and their outcomes when several public organizations are involved.

Nevertheless, a researcher should formulate expectations based on each theoretical perspective, to ensure that the perspectives are contrasting. This is necessary because organizational theories frequently offer broad explanations for organizational processes and outcomes. Moreover, organizational researchers often employ several theories in their explanations, as an empirical phenomenon may have several theoretical explanations (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 14). However, to ensure that the theoretical perspectives are

contrasting is easier in theory than in practice, because various theories may stress different aspects of coordination (i.e. ‘complementing’). The final chapter will examine the theoretical strategy in the light of the experiences recorded in this dissertation.

Expectations will be presented for each theoretical perspective. Such theoretical expectations are related to both process tracing and the congruence method. However, a few expectations display some similarities across the four theoretical perspectives, in contrast to the aim behind the congruence method and a strategy based on contrasting. Although these similar expectations are important for understanding coordination processes and outcomes, no clear differences can be observed between the four perspectives.

The instrumental-hierarchical perspective asserts that political-administrative leaders design organizational structures in which inter-organizational coordination processes operate to achieve the outcome of strong coordination. Under this perspective, leaders implement reforms to achieve desired goals. The formulation of goals and the implementation of measures to achieve those goals therefore represent two important elements of this perspective (Christensen and Lægreid 2001a; Egeberg 2003; Christensen *et al.* 2007a).

The instrumental-negotiation perspective asserts that diverging interests, coalitions, negotiations and conflicts are fundamental features of a political system. In contrast to the instrumental-hierarchical perspective, the instrumental-negotiation perspective asserts that actors want to pursue different interests and goals. Single actors will participate in coalitions if they see that such participation best serves their interests (Bolman and Deal 2007; Christensen *et al.* 2007a). Therefore, actors can use inter-organizational coordination processes to discuss cases and conduct negotiations. However, if the actors have to make multiple compromises in such inter-organizational coordination processes, the outcome may be medium coordination.

The institutional-cultural perspective asserts that informal and cultural features are more important than formal and structural features in inter-organizational coordination processes. The organizational culture affects how an organization actually functions – the members of the organization adapt to values, norms and traditions that have evolved within the organization over time. Such values, norms and traditions are frequently more informal than formal. The ‘logic of appropriateness’ guides the actions of organization members, and the understanding of what is appropriate action frequently differs from organization to organization (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, pp. 37–40). In addition, actions are path-dependent, and organization members frequently employ traditional problem-solution strategies (Selznick 1957; Christensen *et al.* 2007a). The outcome of inter-organizational processes may be either strong coordination or weak coordination, depending on whether the formal and informal organizational processes are compatible or not.

The institutional-myth perspective asserts that the environment of an organization affects how an organization structures activities, such as inter-organizational coordination processes. This can result in increased structural similarity across organizations, due to mimetic, coercive or normative processes (DiMaggio and Powel 1983). ‘Myths are more or less clear recipes for how to design an organization’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 59). Political and administrative leaders of an organization need to manage norms in the environment to ensure legitimacy. ‘Public organizations attain legitimacy by deploying organizational reform methods and solutions regarded as modern and acceptable by the environment at a given period in time’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 124). However, such methods and solutions may be challenged by historical traditions and informal norms and values. Inter-organizational coordination structures are produced from recipes taken from the environment, and are either rejected or decoupled from actual behaviour, merely functioning as ‘window-dressing’.

What similarities and differences exist between these perspectives? The similarities include the fact that all four perspectives concentrate on how to explain concrete actions within and between organizations, such as coordination, communication and goal achievement. In addition, all four perspectives explain linkages or missing linkages between reform and actual changes. They also provide a broad understanding of the kinds of factors organizational leaders should consider before implementing reforms, in order to achieve desired results.

However, there are also important differences between the four perspectives. Christensen *et al.* (2007a, p. 3) focus on three differences. First, the four perspectives offer different views on the link between the 'logic of action' and actual behaviour. Both the instrumental-hierarchical perspective and the instrumental-negotiation perspective focus on the 'logic of consequence', by which decision-makers select the means that are most likely to contribute to the desired ends. The actors always operate rationally under these two perspectives. By contrast, both the institutional-cultural perspective and the institutional-myth perspective do not focus on the 'logic of consequence'. These two perspectives instead focus on the 'logic of appropriateness', under which 'a person acts in accordance with his or her experience of what has worked well in the past, or upon what feels fair, reasonable and acceptable in the environment the person works within' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 3).

Second, when and how administrative and political leaders formulate goals, differs under the instrumental and institutional perspectives. The two instrumental perspectives focus on the formulation of goals before reforms are implemented. By contrast, the institutional perspectives do not distinguish clearly between goal formulation and the implementation of reforms, and goals may 'gradually develop' over time (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 3).

Third, the theoretical perspectives view change differently. The two instrumental perspectives focus on change resulting from reforms implemented by political and administrative leaders, and on change resulting from negotiations between relevant actors. Implementing radical reforms will not be a problem under the instrumental-hierarchical perspective, as it identifies a clear causal link between reforms and actual changes. By contrast, under the instrumental-negotiation perspective, radical reforms will only be a problem if key actors disagree about solutions. If the main actors agree and they are a plurality, radical reforms may be implemented. The institutional perspectives concentrate more on evolutionary changes, since reforms often threaten existing organizational cultures. The existing cultures may also be incompatible with, and therefore threatened by, organizational recipes in the environment (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 3).

Why select these theoretical perspectives? Researchers face a challenge, in that there are many possible theoretical perspectives that explain organizational behaviour (Alexander 1995, p. 7). Therefore, researchers need to select theories that can provide valuable theoretical explanations for empirical phenomena or empirical findings. In addition, researchers should identify theoretical perspectives that predicate specific empirical phenomena. The four theoretical perspectives adopted in this dissertation have been selected for the following reasons.

First, the study of inter-organizational coordination of food safety issues between public organizations requires theories that take context and political considerations into account (Christensen and Lægveid 2001b). In both Norway and New Zealand, one or more ministers influence decision-making related to food safety issues, and professionals therefore need to take political considerations into account. The four selected theoretical perspectives do so, by focusing on organizational structures, organizational cultures, negotiation and conflicts, as well as features of the institutional environment. For example, food safety issues

may involve a risk of illness and a risk to consumer health. In a crisis, politicians have to show that they can manage the crisis. Theoretical perspectives should include insight into such management in explanations of actual behaviour.

Second, several organizational theories may be coupled to coordination. Agency theory and transaction cost theory, for example, are alternatives to the theories selected in this dissertation (Boston *et al.* 1996). Transaction cost theory stresses that coordination can help organization members and leaders to decrease the number of transactions within and between the organizations involved in coordination processes. A reduction in the number of transactions may therefore strengthen coordination (Alexander 1995). Agency theory focuses on contracts between principals and agents, and on the fact that principals and agents need to coordinate their actions in order to sign and implement contracts. However, these parties act in accordance with their own interests. Explanations based on these theories can provide insights into coordination processes in public organizations, but they may also overlook that politicians and public managers need to take considerations other than profit into account (such as quality and transparency), and that they need to balance potentially conflicting goals.

Third, inter-organizational coordination is a complex phenomenon with various facets, such as information sharing, decision-making and negotiation. Studying such a complex phenomenon may require theoretical perspectives that are broad enough to cover different aspects of inter-organizational coordination. A key challenge in this dissertation has been to formulate expectations for each theoretical perspective that match the selected competitive strategy. The final chapter will discuss the use of these theoretical perspectives on the basis of the experience gained by comparing food safety issues in Norway and New Zealand.

1.3 Philosophies of science, methods and design

Mjøset (2007a; 2007b) distinguishes between different ‘philosophies of science’: the standard attitude, the social-philosophical attitude and the pragmatist/participatory attitude. This dissertation employs the pragmatist/participatory attitude, which requires ‘sensitivity for the context of the cases’ (Mjøset 2007a, p. 32). This context comprises relevant aspects that may either promote or hinder inter-organizational coordination. This dissertation discusses day-to-day inter-organizational coordination and inter-organizational crisis coordination in Norway and New Zealand. The context matters because different factors may affect inter-organizational coordination differently in these two countries. The researcher should therefore concentrate on the context when comparing reforms in various countries.

Norway and New Zealand have organized food safety issues differently, and also face different food safety challenges. For example, a disease will have a more harmful impact on the New Zealand economy than Norway, because New Zealand depends more on the export of food to other countries. Accordingly, the results of any study must be examined in the light of the context. ‘Such a sensitivity implies priority to the explanation of cases, and a scepticism towards generalized knowledge that is cut off from the case-level’ (Mjøset 2007a, p. 33).

A sensitive approach should also be taken when formulating research questions. ‘Theories are made from explanations emerging as answers to specified research problems. By selecting new cases, the researcher investigates the range at which the explanation may hold’ (Mjøset 2007b, p. 10). Norway and New Zealand have selected different organizational structures to food safety issues, making it important to study these two countries. Therefore, using variation in the *independent* variable as a selection criterion represents a useful strategy, matching the diverse-cases method (Gerring 2007, pp. 97–98).

This dissertation analyzes the collected data through a combination of the congruence method, process-tracing and active interviewing. The data have been gathered from public documents and through 29 interviews conducted in 2007, 2008 and 2009, primarily with administrative leaders in the three ministries and the food safety agency in Norway, and in the three ministries in New Zealand.

The congruence method involves formulating observable expectations on the basis of theories, and then testing these expectations against observed effects. 'The theory posits a relation between variance in the independent variable and variance in the dependent variable; it can be deductive or take the form of an empirical generalization' (George and Bennett 2005, p. 181). However, testing a theory requires clear expectations, so that the theory can be linked to the empirical material gathered from interviews and documents (Andersen 2007). Further, the congruence method and process tracing can successfully be combined in a study. Process tracing means 'to identify the intervening causal process – the causal chain and causal mechanism – between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable' (George and Bennett 2005, p. 206). This method helps the researcher to link causes with effects, and thus to find relevant explanations of outcomes.

Moreover, using both active interviewing and the congruence method ensure reliability and validity. Theory testing may require such active interviewing. What does active interviewing mean? Active interviewing does not mean asking leading questions. However, such interviewing means to establish a close link between theoretical expectations and questions in an interview guide. The researcher can then test the link between the theoretical expectations and the empirical data. However, establishing a close link will always be a great challenge in a research process (Andersen 2006; Andersen 2007).

Theory refinement can be regarded as a third way between theory testing and theory development. In this dissertation, theory refinement involves formulating expectations from

the theories and attempting to specify the link between inter-organizational coordination processes and outcomes. The comparison of multiple cases both within and across countries provides several empirical observations than a single case study. Theory refinement will be more robust if it incorporates multiple cases, especially where these cases are selected on the basis of a consciously comparative design (George and Bennett 2005). This dissertation can also be a useful first step in the analysis of other inter-organizational coordination structures and cultures, whether in Norway, New Zealand or abroad. The results make it possible to develop new theories, and to adjust existing theories (Gerring 2007).

1.4 Research on the organization and coordination of food safety

Rykkja (2008a) provides a detailed summary of important research findings relating to food safety regulation. Inspired by her summary, this dissertation will provide a more general summary of important research on the organization of food safety issues. It will also introduce some other important research contributions.

Researchers have discussed the organization of food safety issues in many countries, and how such issues should be organized at different political and administrative levels. Rykkja (2008a) discusses the regulation and organization of food safety in Europe at national level (Germany, the UK, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands), and supranational level (the EU). She uses institutional theory and multilevel governance as a theoretical framework for her discussion of such regulation and organization, inspired by Elvbakken (1997). Elvbakken focuses on food safety issues in Norway until 1996. She asks questions related to what kind of characteristics the food safety field exhibits, such as the actors involved and what kind of interests they pursue related to food safety. Elvbakken made an important contribution to organizational thinking in food safety issues.

Studying multilevel governance makes sense when both national and supranational institutions regulate food safety issues at the same time. Several countries have conducted debates and experienced conflicts relating to the division of labour between agricultural and health ministries, and the kinds of values that should influence food safety regulation and organization. ‘The historical development of food regulation, existing institutional arrangements, and different interests and power relations are important explanatories’ (Rykkja 2008a, p. v).

Skarstad (2007) discusses the boundaries between food nutrition and food safety, using fish as an example. Food issues in particular frequently cross several fields, such as nutrition and food safety. Her ‘article discusses the scientific and administrative division between food safety and food nutrition, and points to its foundation and consequences’ (Skarstad 2007, p. 349).

Ansell and Vogel (2006) have edited a book, which discusses the organization of food safety. The editors and the authors compare food safety reforms in several countries (such as France, the UK and Germany), the EU and the WTO. Every policy field includes actors with diverging interests. Such interests frequently involve ‘policy’ conflicts, i.e. conflicts related to goals. However, some conflicts are more fundamental, such as ‘contested governance’, and will often challenge organizational structures. These conflicts concern which actors should make decisions, which institutions should be responsible for decision-making, which considerations should govern decision-making, and which procedures should regulate such decision-making. The organizational affiliations of food safety issues have therefore been ‘contested’ in several countries (Ansell and Vogel 2006, pp. 10–12).

Veggeland (2004) discusses links between international and national food safety institutions, and how international institutions affect national institutions. He discusses national institutional power over policy decisions in a country, and how international

institutions challenge national decisions. Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), more commonly referred to as mad cow disease, required the EU to make decisions and implement reforms. The EU also influences national food safety institutions and actors through the implementation of EU decisions in individual EU member states and member states of the European Economic Area (EEA). However, the EU does not challenge member states' preferred organizational food safety structures as long as national actors comply with EU legislation. Therefore, the member states are free to implement their own national organizational structures to food safety issues. The EU also has a greater ability to influence national policy decisions than, for example, the WTO.

Josling *et al.* (2004) focus on food safety, regulation, globalization, and how institutions, both nationally and internationally, deal with food safety issues. The role of the WTO is especially in focus. 'National governments may have paramount responsibility for food regulation, but the WTO has an important role in both enforcing disciplines on national regulatory decisions and achieving international coordination of regulations and standards' (Josling *et al.* 2004, p. 193).

Terragni (2006) discusses the historical development of food safety issues in Norway, and identifies a paradox. In contrast to the UK, Norway has not experienced a BSE crisis. In addition, Norwegian consumers generally trust the organization of food safety issues in Norway. 'For this reason it was surprising to find that Norwegian consumers trust the safety of their meat less than do their British counterparts. This result is particularly interesting, as Norway is one of the few countries that have never experienced BSE, while Britain has been the country most affected by it' (Terragni 2006, p. 170).

Kjærnes *et al.* (2007, p. 185) analyze 'consumer trust' from a comparative perspective, and 'find that public opinions on trust in food vary considerably and consistently, most of all between countries'. They also identify interesting differences

between countries. The UK, for example, has experienced food scandals like BSE, but consumers nevertheless regard the food as safe. In Germany, by contrast, consumers question how safe food really is. 'Italy, which is renowned for a strong focus on fresh, high-quality food, is marked by the highest and most consistent levels of distrust regarding all aspects of food and the food system' (Kjærnes *et al.* 2007, p. 186). The authors employ a socio-institutional explanation to analyze their findings.

Domingues (2006) analyzes changes in the organization of food safety issues in Portugal, where the organization of such food safety issues have been contested. 'Recent changes in the institutional framework of food safety in Portugal have been initiated by BSE scandals and by EU legislative impact' (Domingues 2006, p. 177). The organization of food safety issues has been debated in the Portuguese parliament several times in an attempt to find appropriate structures.

Rommetvedt (2002) have edited a book of articles relating to different aspects of food and agriculture. The contributors to the book analyze how power shifts between stakeholders in different situations. International agreements affect national opportunities to implement policies. The national scope for action may be reduced by such agreements, although it can also be widened. The contributors also analyzed several matters irrelevant to this dissertation, such as agricultural negotiations, food competition and market features.

Burns (2007) discusses the organization of food safety issues in Hong Kong, combining institutional theory and transaction cost analysis in his discussion. Food safety reforms often alter the balance of power between politicians and administrators, and Burns observed this in Hong Kong. 'Politicians replaced the autonomous arrangements preferred by the colonial state with more tightly controlled institutions' (Burns 2007, p. 27).

Barling *et al.* (2002) use a multi-level governance perspective to analyze the organization of food safety issues in the UK. Food safety issues often require integration

across organizations. ‘Food policy offers a substantial challenge to governments as it reaches across a number of policy areas, demanding responses across these different policy sectors’ (Barling *et al.* 2002, p. 556). Food safety issues therefore require joined-up government, a concept quite similar to the WG concept. ‘Recent institutional reforms have seen the joining-up of some aspects of food policy, albeit in an incremental and somewhat muddled manner’ (Barling *et al.* 2002, p. 565).

Asdal (2005) discusses Norwegian food safety issues in a historical context. Veterinary medicine has been important for the trade in food between countries. Asdal focused on how tensions between veterinary medicine and human medicine have affected the organization and control of food safety issues in Norway. One core question is how to balance health issues and agricultural issues connected to food safety.

Millstone and van Zwanenberg (2002) analyze reforms resulting from food safety crises like the BSE scandal. The UK government established a new agency, the Food Standards Agency (FSA), and disbanded the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, replacing it with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Further, the EU established the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). In addition to making structural changes, the governments of several countries and the European Commission have employed a new rhetoric. ‘The rhetoric asserts that food safety policy should, and will, be made by “independent” agencies advised by “independent scientific experts” and that their procedures should be transparent’ (Millstone and van Zwanenberg 2002, p. 604). However, the authors question the nature of this independence – does it mean independence from commercial interests or independence from political interests? (Millstone and van Zwanenberg 2002, p. 604)

There are no studies that, when discussing the organization of food safety issues, utilize the concept of inter-organizational coordination as a distinct analytical tool linked to

multiple theoretical perspectives. Inter-organizational coordination processes may be important for securing results that cannot otherwise be attained. This dissertation therefore focuses on such processes and their outcomes.

The findings relating to the organization of food safety issues described in this dissertation have been published in a Danish journal, *Politik* (Lie 2009). In addition, an article has been published in a Norwegian journal, *Stat & Styring* (Lie 2010a) discussing food safety challenges in Norway. A further article has been accepted for publication in the international Journal *Public Administration* (Lie 2010b), discussing inter-organizational coordination of food safety issues in Norway. Moreover, a book project (discussing food safety and multi-level governance) in collaboration with Frode Veggeland and the publishing house *Universitetsforlaget* has been published (Lie and Veggeland 2010).

1.5 Why study inter-organizational food safety coordination?

Several factors may explain why it is important to study inter-organizational food safety coordination. *First*, countries select different organizational structures for food safety issues, and comparing such structures provides insights into the causes and effects of variation in such structures. In addition, variation in organizational structures is likely to lead to variation in effects on matters such as efficiency, political steering, coordination and goal achievement (Ansell and Vogel 2006). Several countries have established agencies to deal with food safety issues, but these agencies often have different affiliations to parent ministries (Rothstein 2006; Elvbakken *et al.* 2008; Rykkja 2008a).

Establishing regulatory agencies (or ‘authorities’ – a frequently used label for organizations with regulatory food safety responsibility), seems to be a very popular organizational tactic, in various policy fields and countries (Gilardi 2004; Jordana and

Sancho 2004). Pollitt *et al.* (2001) label this trend ‘agency fever’. Political and administrative leaders frequently create such regulatory agencies ‘at arm’s length’ from ministries. Agencies perform ‘public tasks’, are ‘staffed by public servants’, follow ‘public/administrative law procedures’, and receive money from ‘the state budget’ (Talbot 2004, p. 5). Countries such as Denmark, Sweden and the UK have placed operational responsibility for food safety issues in such regulatory agencies (Asdal 2005; Ansell and Vogel 2006; Slorach 2008; SNFA 2008). Even though several countries have established regulatory agencies to handle food safety issues, these agencies often have different ministerial affiliations.

Second, countries organize food safety differently at different times, designing new reforms to eliminate problems that have evolved over time (Ansell and Vogel 2006). Politicians and administrators in many countries, for example New Zealand, have implemented reforms in recent times due to an increased focus on food safety. Most countries are likely over time to conduct a debate that leads to reforms aimed at improving the food safety structure. Increased pressure to ensure food safety has stimulated reforms in many countries. Further, a food safety crisis, such as BSE, may stimulate reforms and structural changes, because it may require alteration of the organizational structure to ensure better and more efficient communication.

Third, food safety affects consumer health. To reduce the risk of disease, many countries have implemented food safety reforms, frequently affecting inter-organizational coordination, to ensure healthy consumers. According to Ansell and Vogel (2006, p. 4), ‘few other areas of public policy so directly, personally, and continually affect the well-being of every citizen’. Policy fields that involve high risk frequently require more political steering than lower-risk policy fields. Food safety is a high-risk policy field, as people need food even when there is a risk of disease and a lack of alternatives. Ensuring that food is safe (i.e.

that the risk of a food disease is as low as possible), will therefore always be an important service to the health of consumers. ‘Regulating food safety risks is foremost an exercise in protecting public health and safety’, rather than business interests (Skogstad 2006, p. 215). Therefore, how to organize food safety issues, and how to balance health issues and business interests, has been debated for a long time in many countries (Rykkja 2008a). Hopefully, no politicians will want to pursue a policy that may increase the risk of illness or disease.

Fourth, the export of food to other countries is a significant factor in the national economies of many countries, including New Zealand. The export of such food requires the assurance that food is safe. Such an assurance demands a food safety system that is capable of regulating and controlling food (Ansell and Vogel, p. 4). When the national economy depends on food exports, food safety becomes more important.

Fifth, the food safety policy field requires inter-organizational coordination between several organizations. Therefore, this field can successfully be used to the testing of inter-organizational coordination theory. Several policy fields, such as health, fisheries, consumer issues, trade, foreign affairs and agriculture, are relevant to food safety. Therefore, multiple state-sector organizations need to work together to achieve common results.

1.6 Why compare reforms in several countries?

This dissertation compares the organization of food safety issues in Norway and New Zealand. The comparative approach is a useful strategy, for several reasons. What are the benefits?

First, comparisons between countries provide insights into similarities and differences between them. So, why compare the organization and coordination of food safety issues in New Zealand and Norway? The two countries were selected on the basis of

variation in the independent variable. Examining two diverse cases provides a solid basis for obtaining more information about inter-organizational coordination structures and cultures, and about how inter-organizational coordination processes operate within such structures and cultures.

Second, these similarities and differences may show that organizational design is important, and that varying the design produces different effects. Studying such effects provides an opportunity for organizational learning and finding out more about how inter-organizational processes function in practice and in different contexts, such as the cases of Norway and New Zealand. Both countries focus on inter-organizational coordination processes and outcomes in relation to food safety issues, although the two countries have organized their food safety issues differently. The benefit of this is that a comparison of the two countries provides insights into how inter-organizational processes work in practice. The selection of cases based on variation in the independent variable allows investigation of how inter-organizational coordination processes works within different structures.

Third, the use of multiple case studies, such as the two cases in this dissertation, increases the amount of empirical data that can be used analytically (Lijphart 1971; Heady 1984). Therefore, an increased amount of empirical data (obtained, for example, by studying two countries rather than a single country) will often ensure greater validity, i.e. the ability to make important and relevant statements about an empirical phenomenon (Andersen 1997).

Fourth, such data may be used to test observable expectations based on theory. The comparison of multiple case studies of reforms facilitates the development of theoretical concepts and new organizational theories, as well as the testing of existing theories. The identification of processes, patterns and mechanisms is easier when a comparative perspective is applied, because similarities and differences are systematically revealed by more empirical observations (George and Bennett 2005; Andersen 2007). Comparing

Norway and New Zealand allows identification of such processes, patterns and mechanisms. Comparing two different countries generates additional data, which can be used to test theories. Accordingly, a study may become more challenging, but also more interesting and relevant to the reader, as more countries are examined.

Fifth, food safety issues require inter-organizational coordination processes between various state-sector organizations in Norway and New Zealand. The food safety policy field is a useful one, because inter-organizational coordination is a much more challenging form of coordination than intra-organizational coordination.

What are the challenges associated with such a comparison? First, political systems operate differently in different countries, making it difficult to understand how organizations work in practice. The author of this dissertation is more familiar with the Norwegian context than the New Zealand context, since the author lives in Norway. Accordingly, it has been more challenging to understand the organization of food safety issues in New Zealand than in Norway.

Second, countries vary in their political and administrative cultures, and these cultures may affect how decision-makers select organizational structures as well as inter-organizational coordination processes. Therefore, such cultural differences can be difficult to understand without much time in a country. It takes time to understand how things work in practice. Even though it may be regarded as quite a short time, the researcher spent almost three months in Wellington in New Zealand.

Third, the causes of food safety reform vary between countries, making it difficult to compare and analyze concrete effects of various reforms. Frequently, causes and effects need to be considered together. Therefore, contexts matter.

1.7 Alternative comparison of countries

The researcher made an explicit choice by selecting to compare Norway and New Zealand with regard to inter-organizational food safety coordination. What are relevant alternatives? The researcher could have selected various other countries to study.

One alternative would have been to compare Norway to a country with a similar inter-organizational structure – three ministries responsible for one food safety agency. France, where a single food safety agency is subordinated to three ministries, could have been an appropriate example (Borraz *et al.* 2006, p. 128), as could the Netherlands, where two ministries are responsible for one food safety agency (Elvbakken *et al.* 2008; Rykkja 2008a). The researcher could thus have examined inter-organizational coordination of food safety issues in two countries which have both made several ministries responsible for one food safety agency. Such a comparison would make it possible to investigate challenging inter-organizational structures.

However, one significant problem is language. The researcher does not speak French, which would present difficulties both in reading public documents and in conducting interviews. Another disadvantage of comparing France and Norway is the loss of the opportunity to compare two countries with different organizational structures, and the related opportunity to see how inter-organizational coordination processes operate under these different organizational structures.

A second alternative would have been to compare Norway to a country whose food safety agency is attached to *a ministry of agriculture*, such as Sweden or Denmark (Elvbakken *et al.* 2008; Rykkja 2008a). Such a comparison would be an interesting strategy with regard to the vertical dimension. However, the strategy would be less interesting with regard to the horizontal dimension, since this dimension is not found in single-ministry structures.

A third alternative would have been to compare Norway to a country whose food safety agency is attached to *a ministry of health*. One country that to some extent matches this description is the UK, where the food safety agency is more independent of ministries than in Norway. The food safety agency in the UK reports to Parliament through health ministers (Elvbakken *et al.* 2008; Rykkja 2008a). The example of the UK could illuminate important facets of inter-organizational coordination processes, given that the UK's agriculture ministry has less influence over food safety issues than the ministry of agriculture in Norway. Assigning food safety issues to a health ministry makes such issues less vulnerable to interference based on business interests. Therefore, whether a food safety agency is attached to a health ministry or an agricultural ministry may make a significant difference with regard to coordination.

A fourth alternative would be to leave Norway out of the study, and compare the reform in New Zealand with another country. Which country may be relevant for a comparison to New Zealand? One relevant country may be to compare New Zealand (2002-2007) to a country with only one ministry responsible for food safety, such as Sweden. In Sweden the food safety agency is attached to the ministry of agriculture. The advantage would be to compare two countries without any challenging horizontal inter-organizational coordination challenges, and just study vertical inter-organizational challenges. The disadvantage of this option is that the challenging horizontal inter-organizational structure in Norway would have been left out of the study. Studying such challenging horizontal inter-organizational processes will be important in gaining more insight into how such processes operate in practice. A fifth option is to compare New Zealand to another country with one food safety agency attached to a ministry – however not to a ministry of agriculture but rather a ministry of health. One relevant country could be the UK.

1.8 Outline of this dissertation

Chapter *two* describes the concept of coordination by reference to the four selected theoretical perspectives, which provide different views on inter-organizational coordination processes and outcomes. Important dimensions of coordination are discussed.

Chapter *three* outlines the methods used in this dissertation and the challenges researchers encounter when using case studies and respondent interviews. Both the strengths and the weaknesses of these tools are discussed.

Chapter *four* provides an overview of reform trends in Norway, and a discussion of their effects. The chapter discusses the first research question: What are the general reform trends in the central administration in Norway, and what, according to the four theoretical perspectives, are the effects of these trends?

Chapter *five* provides an overview of reform trends in New Zealand and discusses the effects of these reform trends. The chapter discusses the second research question: What are the general reform trends in the state sector in New Zealand, and what, according to the four theoretical perspectives, are the effects of these trends? Chapters four and five provide a contextual framework for the food safety reforms implemented in Norway and New Zealand. General trends provide a context for the discussion of food safety issues in the two countries.

Chapter *six* discusses the findings of the study of food safety coordination in Norway from the four theoretical perspectives. The chapter discusses the third research question: How has the Norwegian food safety reform implemented in 2004 affected formal and actual horizontal inter-organizational structure and culture and the inter-organizational coordination processes between the MAF, the MFCA and the MHCS? Chapter six also discusses the fourth research question: Do these ministries have an integrated coordination framework, or do they operate independently? Moreover, the chapter discusses the fifth research question: How has the Norwegian food safety reform affected the vertical inter-organizational

coordination structure and culture, and consequently the coordination processes between the three ministries and the NFSA?

Chapter *seven* discusses the findings of the study of food safety coordination in New Zealand. The chapter discusses the sixth research question: How have the food safety reforms implemented in New Zealand in 2002 and 2007 affected vertical and horizontal inter-organizational structures and cultures, and consequently the coordination processes between the NZFSA, the MoH and the MAF? This chapter also discusses the seventh research question: What are the effects on coordination in Norway and New Zealand of these horizontal and vertical inter-organizational coordination processes?

The final chapter, chapter *eight*, discusses similarities and differences between the case of Norway and the case of New Zealand. Potential trends, actual effects and paradoxes are discussed. This chapter discusses the eighth research question: How can the theoretical perspectives explain the differences and similarities between these two countries? Chapter eight also discusses the ninth research question: How do the food safety reforms implemented in Norway and New Zealand compare to reforms implemented in other policy fields than food safety in these two, and other, countries? The scope for generalization is discussed, as are possible explanations for similarities and differences. In this chapter, findings from chapters 4 and 5 are combined with insights from chapters 6 and 7.

2. Coordination and theoretical perspectives

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the concept of inter-organizational coordination and the theoretical perspectives used to explain the empirical findings of this dissertation. Concrete expectations are formulated on the basis of each theoretical perspective, and each theoretical perspective is linked to the concept of inter-organizational coordination.

This chapter focuses on the following elements: First, this chapter outlines research on inter-organizational coordination. Second, this chapter connects coordination to markets, hierarchies and networks. Third, dimensions of coordination are outlined. Fourth, various theoretical strategies are outlined. Fifth, concrete expectations for the theoretical perspectives are presented. Sixth, the chapter sums up the expectations in the form of a table.

2.2 Research on inter-organizational coordination

Inter-organizational coordination means coordination between several organizations, whereas intra-organizational coordination means coordination within an organization. Several researchers have focused on such inter-organizational coordination for a long time (Rogers and Whetten 1982). In the 1950s and 1960s, researchers employed cases to study inter-organizational coordination. Such case studies were used to discuss positive and negative aspects of processes involved (Rogers and Whetten 1982, p. 5).

Given that inter-organizational coordination is a broad concept that encompasses various features, it is difficult to define the concept theoretically. Nevertheless, a discussion of inter-organizational coordination requires a clear definition. Therefore, several definitions

will be discussed, because there are differences between them. 'Definitions vary on a continuum ranging from voluntary adjustment to systematic control' (Alexander 1995, p. 21).

Mulford and Rogers (1982, p. 12) define inter-organizational coordination '*as the process whereby two or more organizations create and/or use existing decision rules that have been established to deal collectively with their shared task environment*'. These researchers focus on the process of inter-organizational coordination, which is an important element in such coordination. Alexander (1995, p. 3), however, criticizes this definition, and asks what exactly it implies. Is inter-organizational coordination a structure, a process, a decision, an action or an outcome? In any event, the definition does not take the structural element adequately into account. Several researchers include 'mutual adjustment' as a component of their definitions of inter-organizational coordination. Alexander (1995, p. 5), however, challenges this approach: 'The drawback of a definition of coordination which includes all mutual adjustment, is that it dilutes the concept to the point of making it almost meaningless'. However, mutual adjustment may be one of several important elements of coordination (Alexander 1995, p. 270).

In addition, several researchers employ a normative perspective. They argue both that inter-organizational coordination has positive aspects and that organizations should focus on such coordination rather than on reforms involving too much specialization. However, Alexander also challenges this argument: 'If all coordination is good, and more coordination is better than less, how can we look at coordination, distinguish between different kinds of coordination, and learn which are more effective and why' (Alexander 1995, p. 269).

Alexander defines inter-organizational coordination as '*a set of organizations' recognition and management of their interdependence, by creating or using IOC [inter-organizational coordination] structures to decide on their actions together*' (Alexander

1995, p. 271). In focusing on structures, Alexander establishes a useful definition, even though it does not otherwise differ significantly from the definition of Mulford and Rogers (1982). However, Alexander does not distinguish between processes and outcomes in his definition of inter-organizational coordination. Any definition should include this distinction between processes and outcomes, because it proves to be useful. Mintzberg (1979) makes a useful indirect distinction between coordination processes and outcomes, while Jacobsen (1993) makes this distinction directly. The distinction between coordination processes and outcomes should also be linked to the distinction between intra-organizational and inter-organizational coordination. Simon (1965, p. 139) also focuses on coordination: 'Coordination is aimed at the adoption by all the members of the group of the *same* decision, or more precisely of mutually consistent decisions in combination attaining the established goal'.

Mintzberg (1979) focuses on coordination, but does not make a clear distinction between the two. He does, however, distinguish between several coordination mechanisms; such as 'mutual adjustment', 'standardization of worker skills', 'standardization of work processes', 'standardization of work outputs' and 'direct supervision' (Mintzberg 1979, p. 3). What does he mean by these concepts? First, 'mutual adjustment' describes a situation in which several actors communicate more or less informally to achieve common results. Second, 'direct supervision' means active leadership whereby leaders give instructions and oversee work processes and results. Third, 'standardization of work processes' means that instructions regulate the work processes. Fourth, 'standardization of work outputs' means that instructions regulate the outcome of the work processes. Fifth, 'standardization of worker skills' means that instructions regulate the skills needed in such work processes (Mintzberg 1979). The mechanisms developed by Mintzberg are more relevant to private

than public organizations, as he describes typical work processes in factories that manufacture products, such as cars.

How should inter-organizational coordination be defined, given the valuable insights of various researchers? An inter-organizational coordination process includes different elements, such as decision-making rules, mutual adjustment, policy discussions, negotiations, information sharing and concrete decision-making (Whetten 1982; Jacobsen 1993; Douma and Schreuder 2002; State Services Commission 2008). Inter-organizational decision-making processes need to influence intra-organizational coordination processes if strong coordination is to be ensured. Such a link may require an inter-organizational structure.

This dissertation distinguishes between three outcomes of such inter-organizational processes: strong, medium and weak coordination. In qualitative studies, using too many categories will often make it difficult to categorize an empirical phenomenon, since quantitative measurement is always problematic in qualitative studies. The three categories of outcome are intended to link *inter-organizational* and *intra-organizational* coordination. *Strong* coordination signifies that behaviour (decisions and actions) in inter-organizational coordination processes influence behaviour (decisions and actions) in intra-organizational processes. By contrast, *weak* coordination signifies that behaviour (decisions and actions) in inter-organizational processes do not influence decisions made in intra-organizational processes. *Medium* coordination signifies that while some type of behaviour (decisions and actions) in inter-organizational processes do influence intra-organizational processes, others do not.

A strong link between *inter-organizational* and *intra-organizational* coordination makes an organization more dependent on other organizations, and may be a disadvantage. Therefore, a strong link challenges the autonomy of the organization. By contrast, a weak

link can be a sign of much autonomy for an organization. However, coordination may frequently be required when issues span different policy fields, such as food safety issues. Moreover, participation in inter-organizational coordination processes has the advantage of giving the participants access to resources, information and knowledge that they would otherwise lack. Further, some cases may require greater inter-organizational coordination than others (for example cases that are important to politicians).

Moreover, strong *inter-organizational* coordination does not necessarily involve strong *intra-organizational* coordination. The link between inter-organizational and intra-organizational coordination can sometimes be weak, if the participants do not manage to implement decisions intra-organizationally due to cultural resistance or conflicts between groups with diverging interests. Equally, weak inter-organizational coordination processes do not necessarily involve weak intra-organizational coordination processes. However, not all inter-organizational coordination processes need to be directed towards intra-organizational coordination.

2.3 Factors promoting and preventing inter-organizational coordination

Several factors either prevent or promote inter-organizational coordination. Each relevant factor may contribute to the outcome; strong coordination. However, a combination of several positive factors may increase the chances of this particular outcome.

First, inter-organizational coordination may be promoted by a clear division of labour between, for example, ministries, and between the ministries and subordinate agencies. By contrast, an unclear division of labour may prevent such coordination. An unclear division of labour increases the likelihood of overlaps and grey zones, which make coordination challenging (Peters 1998; Bakvis and Juillet 2004). Unclear division of labour occurs, according to Peters (1998, p. 303), ‘when two organizations perform the same task

(redundancy)', or 'when no organization performs a necessary task (lacunae), and when policies with the same clients (including the entire society as the clients) have different goals and requirements (incoherence)'. The existence of grey zones in the division of labour increases the need for coordination. However, a very clear division of labour may sometimes prevent inter-organizational coordination, as it reduces the demand for such coordination.

Duplication, or superfluity, may also challenge the division of labour between organizations. On the one hand, such duplication may cause inefficiency or needless behaviour that could be used to perform more important tasks. In addition, duplication may cause responsibility challenges because several actors from various organizations perform some of the same tasks and the performance of such tasks may be viewed as a threat by one or several actors. On the other hand, such duplication may play a significant role within and between organizations. 'The appearance, therefore, of duplication and overlap in administrative agencies are not necessarily signs of waste and inefficiency' (Landau 1969, p. 356). What can be positive aspects of duplication? 'It provides safety factors, permits flexible responses to anomalous situations and provides a creative potential for those who are able to see it' (Landau 1969, p. 356).

Second, inter-organizational coordination is promoted by the creation of meeting arenas, in which civil servants can establish decision-making rules, adjust mutually, share information, discuss policy and make decisions. Such arenas may, for example, take the form of inter-ministry meetings. By contrast, inter-organizational coordination may be prevented if such arenas do not exist (Jacobsen 1993). Arenas of this kind are a very important factor in making inter-organizational coordination work efficiently. However, inter-organizational coordination processes can take effect outside such arenas, when actors make mutual adjustments. Horizontal arenas for meetings between ministries are quite similar to networks. Network coordination involves processes for information sharing, joint

planning, joint decision-making structures and staff exchanges, and will frequently also feature organizations with hierarchical intra-organizational structures (Verhoest *et al.* 2007). Later in this chapter, networks are discussed in combination with other forms of coordination, such as hierarchies and markets. Scharpf (1994, p. 41) argues that ‘self-organizing networks of high-trust relationships may in fact serve some of the functions ascribed to hierarchical structures’.

Third, goals that are common to several organizations may promote inter-organizational coordination. By contrast, significantly conflicting and diverging goals may hinder such coordination (Alexander 1995; State Services Commission 2008). Sometimes common goals may reduce the demand for inter-organizational coordination processes, if the actors can work more or less independently to achieve common goals. In practice, however, inter-organizational coordination is frequently required if two or more organizations have common goals, because such goals always need clarification.

Further, organizations can achieve inter-organizational coordination, despite the existence of conflicts between them. Sometimes, organizations need to make decisions in inter-organizational processes regardless of conflicts. Such situations frequently require the actors to make compromises, but actors always find such compromises difficult to achieve. Compromises will, however, often be necessary in decision-making if the actors are pursuing different goals and a decision needs to be made.

Fourth, active leadership/steering and/or a lead organization promote inter-organizational coordination. By contrast, a lack of active leadership and/or a lead organization may prevent inter-organizational coordination (Alexander 1995). Leadership frequently has both formal and informal aspects. In addition, leaders need to negotiate in different situations. On the formal side, leaders need to implement goals and decisions, and to monitor their effects. On the informal side, informal leadership involves ‘*informal*

interaction with people within the framework of a formal organization' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 101). Inter-organizational coordination frequently requires leadership/steering, as the processes involved are complex and also involve decision-making. A leader and/or lead organization therefore plays an important role by supervising the implementation of the decisions made in inter-organizational coordination meeting arenas. Further, inter-organizational coordination requires leaders who focus on discussions and finding appropriate solutions rather than in issuing formal instructions.

Fifth, positive attitudes towards inter-organizational coordination promote coordination. By contrast, negative attitudes prevent such coordination (Whetten 1982). Positive attitudes often make people more dedicated to a task or mission, and this can make inter-organizational coordination processes work more efficiently. Negative attitudes can hinder inter-organizational coordination, as people become less willing to dedicate themselves to issues that relate to several organizations. Frequently, such issues present greater challenges than intra-organizational issues.

Further, mutual trust and positive experiences work to make inter-organizational coordination processes more efficient. By contrast, distrust and negative experiences may hinder inter-organizational coordination processes, and make it harder to make decisions (Alexander 1995). Negative experiences are likely to make civil servants more sceptical about voluntary involvement in inter-organizational processes. Such negative experiences may be coupled to the degree of personal chemistry between the participants in the inter-organizational coordination processes. A good 'vibe' between the participants will often be important for the efficient working of inter-organizational coordination processes.

Sixth, coordination is promoted when the number of participants is small and the participants are separated by a short geographical distance and/or have shared IT-systems. A long geographical distance and/or a lack of shared IT systems may prevent inter-

organizational coordination processes. Frequently, face-to-face contact is important to make inter-organizational coordination processes work efficiently (Egeberg 1994, p. 87). Therefore, shared IT systems are often necessary, but not always sufficient, to make such processes work. Inter-organizational coordination processes will frequently be stronger when the number of organizations involved remains low. A low number of organizations will reduce transaction costs in inter-organizational processes (for example transaction theory). The challenges presented by inter-organizational coordination processes normally increase when many organizations become involved, because the transaction costs rise. It takes more effort to ensure success in inter-organizational processes involving many organizations than to ensure success in processes involving few organizations.

Gittell and Weis (2004, p. 146) focus on both intra- and inter-organizational coordination. These researchers focus on the health care field. This field has some common features with the food safety field, in that it requires both intra- and inter-organizational coordination. These two fields have various common features. First, both fields focus on coordination mechanisms like 'routines' and 'team meetings'. Second, they both focus on the similarities between intra-organizational coordination processes and inter-organizational coordination processes, and such mechanisms can strengthen coordination. Third, the two fields both use the same mechanisms for intra- and inter-organizational coordination processes, thus strengthening the likelihood of coordination: 'Through the use of organization design to strengthen networks at multiple levels, intra-organizational coordination capabilities can be leveraged to achieve coordination across organizations' (Gittell and Weis 2004, p. 149).

Alexander (1995) explains why leaders create inter-organizational coordination processes and structures by reference to exchange theory, contingency theory, organizational ecology, and transaction cost theory. Following an evaluation, Alexander argues that

‘transaction cost theory’ is the best coordination theory. ‘Transaction cost theory implies an even more structured definition of coordination than do exchange theory, contingency theory or organizational ecology’ (Alexander 1995, p. 14). One advantage, according to Alexander, is that transaction cost theory can include a mutual-adjustment component.

Although these theories (contingency theory, exchange theory and organizational ecology) are useful, they have the disadvantage of not taking the political context into account. The study of inter-organizational coordination in public-sector organizations requires information about the political context. Such contextual information is important because public and state sector organizations pursue multifunctional goals, and political-administrative leaderships must balance different norms and values (Christensen and Lægreid 2002). In addition, political leaders are responsible to citizens for the decisions and actions implemented in ministries and agencies (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, pp. 6–8). ‘The *principle of ministerial rule* is central in many representative parliamentary democracies. This means that the individual cabinet minister is responsible for everything that happens in his or her subordinate organizations’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 153). The theories presented by Alexander do not distinguish clearly between private and public organizations.

This dissertation discusses four theories that are more relevant to the study of inter-organizational coordination processes and outcomes in public-sector organizations than the theories adopted by Alexander (1995), as the theories in this dissertation take the political context into account. The four theories will be presented later in this chapter.

Markets, hierarchies and networks will often promote coordination, for various reasons (Alexander 1995; Peters 1998; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004; Verhoest *et al.* 2007). However, these three mechanisms function in different ways. First, market coordination does not involve instructions and control mechanisms. Rather, price mechanism ensures coordination between independent actors, and regulates the relationship between supply and

demand. Therefore, coordination occurs voluntary between various actors. However, coordination in the market sometimes involves organizations or companies with hierarchical features.

Second, hierarchical coordination, frequently used in bureaucracies, involves leaders employing instructions and control mechanisms to ensure that civil servants pursue organizational goals (Verhoest *et al.* 2007). Such coordination can be either intra-organizational or inter-organizational. Alexander (1995) argues that bureaucracies, with their numerous procedures, make inter-organizational coordination processes more challenging. Such procedures reduce the chances of success in building inter-organizational coordination processes to achieve shared outcomes. This is because coordination processes of this kind often require creativeness, which such hierarchical procedures suppress.

However, structural similarity may increase the chances of greater inter-organizational coordination, due to the existence of similar departments or sections. It will be easier to build inter-organizational processes in such circumstances, because the organizations involved have departments or sections that can focus specifically on such coordination processes (Alexander 1995). In addition, Peters (1998, p. 302) argues that strong vertical processes may challenge strong horizontal processes, because the room for horizontal coordination may be reduced when the vertical processes are strong.

Third, coordination through networks involves actors making agreements horizontally (Peters 1998; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004). Network coordination involves processes for information sharing, joint planning, joint decision-making structures and staff exchanges, and will frequently also involve organizations with hierarchical intra-organizational structures (Verhoest *et al.* 2007). Problems and challenges (frequently referred to as ‘wicked’ issues), will often arise across organizational boundaries. Networks may be presented as the solution to such problems and challenges. Weber and Khademian

(2008) suggest that the inter-organizational coordination of actors from various organizations is required to inject competence into the network.

Keast *et al.* (2004, pp. 364–365) distinguish between networks and network structures. Networks are formalized connections between actors from different organizations. In network structures, by contrast, the participating actors are more committed to a common goal than in ordinary, more loosely coupled, networks. In practice, however, it is not easy to establish clear boundaries between networks and network structures. Moreover, network structures and organizational structures differ, because network structures do not involve ‘typical forms of power and authority’. This difference makes the distinction between networks and network structures even more difficult to understand in practice.

The matrix structure, which is discussed in this dissertation, combines features of hierarchies and networks (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 26). It describes the situation where an organization, such as a food safety agency, reports to several superior organizations at the same time, for example several ministries.

2.4 Dimensions of coordination

The concept of coordination has several dimensions. *Intra*-organizational coordination means coordination within an organization, whereas *inter*-organizational coordination means coordination between several organizations. Intra-organizational coordination often requires fewer resources than inter-organizational coordination.

Christensen and Lægreid (2008, p. 102) argue that coordination is either *internal* or *external*, or both. Internal coordination means coordination within the central government, whereas external coordination means coordination between the central government and

organizations outside it, such as civil society organizations, international organizations, or local municipalities. This dissertation discusses internal coordination.

In addition, both specialization and coordination will be either vertical or horizontal, or both. In addition, specialization and coordination may be either intra-organizational or inter-organizational, or both (Egeberg 2003; Christensen and Lægreid 2008). *Horizontal specialization* involves dividing tasks among multiple units at the same hierarchical level. Such units may be contained within a single organization or spread among several organizations.

Gullick (1937) distinguishes between different types of horizontal specialization. Territorial specialization involves an organizational structure mirroring the territorial division of a country or region. Client specialization involves an organizational structure having departments for different types of clients. Process specialization involves the organizational structure being specialized by reference to processes, for example by establishing a department for planning activities. Purpose specialization involves the organizational structure being specialized by reference to purpose. For example, tasks may be divided among several ministries with different purposes, such as a ministry of health, a ministry of agriculture, and a ministry of fisheries (Egeberg 2003; Christensen *et al.* 2007a).

Horizontal coordination involves linking tasks to several units at the same hierarchical level. Such units may be contained within a single organization or spread among several organizations (Egeberg 2003; Bakvis and Juillet 2004). *Vertical specialization* involves dividing tasks among several levels of a hierarchy. *Vertical coordination* involves linking tasks to several levels of a hierarchy, which may exist within a single organization or encompass several organizations (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 24). In a hierarchy, subordinate units communicate information up the hierarchy through reporting systems, and leaders communicate instructions down to subordinate positions (Egeberg 2003; Pollitt and

Bouckaert 2004; Verhoest *et al.* 2007). This dissertation discusses both vertical and horizontal inter-organizational coordination processes and outcomes.

Lack of coordination often leads to fragmentation. Jacobsson and Sundtröm (2009, p. 104) distinguish between horizontal and vertical fragmentation. First, vertical inter-organizational fragmentation occurs when an organization, such as an agency, is too autonomous of its parent organization, such as a ministry. Too much autonomy can make inter-organizational coordination challenging. Second, horizontal inter-organizational fragmentation occurs when multiple policy issues are not coordinated. Policy issues frequently require coordination across organizational boundaries, and fragmentation will easily result if the organizations involved do not manage to coordinate their actions.

The degree of inter-organizational coordination depends on the form of autonomy in question. Verhoest *et al.* (2010, p. 19) make a useful distinction between managerial autonomy and policy autonomy. What is the difference between these two concepts? Managerial autonomy means ‘that agencies are exempted from certain rules and regulations concerning input management, which traditionally enhance the legality and economy of governmental transactions and constrain managerial discretion’. By contrast, policy autonomy ‘indicates the extent to which the agency itself can take decisions about: the (sub) processes and procedures it has to conduct to produce the externally prescribed goods or services; the policy instruments used to implement the externally set policy and the quantity and quality of the goods or services to be produced; and the target groups and societal objectives and outcomes to be reached by the policy’.

Moreover, coordination processes are either *formal* or *informal*, or both. Formal and informal coordination processes may be either intra-organizational or inter-organizational, or both. Formal inter-organizational coordination processes are linked to formal inter-organizational structures. In such processes, communication follows formal inter-

organizational structures, and formal documents and formal organizational maps describe how communication is organized. By contrast, informal inter-organizational coordination processes are not linked to such formal inter-organizational structures. In such processes, communication does not follow formal structures, and no formal documents describe how communication is organized. Such informal inter-organizational coordination processes frequently require mutual trust between actors.

Simon (1965, pp. 139–140) distinguishes between *procedural coordination* and *substantive coordination*. Procedural coordination regulates individual behaviour and the links between individuals in organizations. Such procedural coordination can also regulate inter-organizational coordination. Substantive coordination means coordination of the content of various activities. Such content can also result from inter-organizational coordination between different organizations.

Scharpf (1994, pp. 38–39) distinguishes between positive and negative coordination. On the one hand, ‘positive coordination is an attempt to maximize the overall effectiveness and efficiency of government policy by exploring and utilizing the joint strategy options of several ministerial portfolios’. On the other hand, negative coordination means ‘to ensure that any new policy initiative designed by a specialized subunit within the ministerial organization will not interfere with the established policies and the interests of other ministerial units’.

2.5 Theoretical strategies

Researchers explain empirical observations by reference to one or more theoretical strategies. Roness (2009, p. 47) distinguishes clearly between several possible strategies. The first strategy involves ‘prioritising’ by selecting one theory from among different theories. A

disadvantage of this strategy is the risk of leaving out important theories that may explain key observations. However, a researcher may also find that there is a time-saving advantage in using only one theory, rather than several.

The second strategy involves ‘complementing’ by ‘using several theories at the same time, considering them as a whole’ (Roness 2009, p. 46). The advantages include that using several ‘complementing’ theories may help to produce ‘a better understanding than each theory can do on its own’ (Roness 2009, p. 50). The disadvantages include that the boundaries of the theories’ explanatory power can be unclear.

The third strategy involves ‘synthesizing’, i.e. researchers using ‘elements from several theories’ to create a unified, new theory. ‘Unlike complementing and contrasting, the (original) theories are not separated, but form parts of a totality. The resulting synthesis can be regarded as *one* theory, but the basis for the theory is a wider set of ideas on relationships than for prioritizing’ (Roness 2009, p. 54). The advantage is that the researcher uses the best elements of several theories. A disadvantage is that this strategy seems to be quite similar to prioritising.

The fourth strategy involves ‘contrasting’, i.e. examining ‘several theories at the same time, comparing them with each other’ (Roness 2009, p. 46). Contrasting theories therefore involves finding the theory with the best ‘explanatory power’. ‘The theories gain support to the extent that the findings correspond with the predictions’ (Roness 2009, p. 52). The contrasting strategy therefore involves theory testing. ‘Theory testing aims to strengthen or reduce support for a theory, narrow or extend the scope conditions of a theory, or determine which of two or more theories best explains a case, type, or general phenomenon’ (George and Bennett 2005, p. 109). When using this strategy, a researcher has an incentive to make changes to existing theories or develop new theories. A disadvantage is that the

researcher may focus only on theories with great explanatory power, and fail to take account of other potentially valuable theories. This dissertation employs a contrasting strategy.

2.6 The instrumental-hierarchical perspective

This perspective asserts that political and administrative leaders design formal organizations. Such organizations are to influence the behaviour of organization members. ‘All behaviour involves conscious or unconscious selection of particular actions out of all those which are physically possible to the actor and to those persons over whom he exercises influence and authority’ (Simon 1965, p. 3). The leaders use ‘rational calculation’ to design and redesign formal organizational structures. ‘By *formal organizational structure* – often merely called organizational structure – we mean a structure that consists of positions and rules for who shall or can do what and which defines how various tasks should be executed’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 21).

What are the implications of an instrumental-hierarchical perspective? The primary implication is that organizations direct the behaviour of organization members in a desired direction (Egeberg 2003; Egeberg and Trondal 2009). Goals are important for organizations, and affect human behaviour within organizations. ‘A great deal of behaviour, and particularly the behaviour of individuals within administrative organizations, is purposive – oriented toward goals or objectives’ (Simon 1965, p. 4). The food safety agency in Norway can be seen as an instrument for achieving better food safety. ‘Explanations that start with the idea of organizations as instruments are concerned with clarifying goals and means-ends conceptions of organizations and their members, which choice of action they follow, and whether and how the result of an action accords with what was desired’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 21).

Formal organizational structures pursue impersonal goals, and civil servants are required to follow formal rules, guidelines and routines. Why do organization members pursue such impersonal goals? Egeberg (2003, p. 117) focuses on three explanations. First, the civil servants 'may feel a moral obligation' to follow organizational rules, guidelines and routines. An organizational socialization process also works to ensure that the participants operate according to such rules and guidelines. Second, the civil servants in an organization will follow rules and guidelines due to 'rewards and punishments'. Third, social control may ensure that civil servants act according to rules and guidelines.

Hierarchy, division of labour and routines represent three important features of a bureaucracy (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 21), and the 'structure determines what authority and resources can be legitimately used, how, when, where, and by whom' (Olsen 2006, p. 3). The formal organizational structure determines information patterns within a hierarchy. 'Although the formal organizational structure does not necessarily indicate anything about the actual behaviour of members in an organization, it will constrain how tasks are carried out' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 27).

Rationality is an important concept in organizational theory. 'Roughly speaking, rationality is concerned with the selection of preferred behaviour alternatives in terms of some system of values whereby the consequences of behaviour can be evaluated' (Simon 1965, p. 75). Organizational leaders solve problems and make decisions. Each decision-making situation encompasses 'problems' or 'goals', 'alternatives', 'consequences' and 'decision-making rules' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, pp. 22–23). Organizational leaders should choose the option that is best suited to the accomplishment of objectives, and this affects the concrete action taken by the organization. Decision-making situations of this kind require 'full rationality', which is difficult to achieve in practice.

‘The concept of *full instrumental rationality* refers to an organization having clear and consistent goals, a full overview of all the alternatives and full insight into which consequences these alternatives will bring in relation to its goals’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 23). By contrast, satisfactory outcomes only require ‘bounded rationality’, and may therefore be more realistic than ‘full instrumental rationality’. According to March (1994, pp. 8–9), decision-makers do not have an overview of all alternatives and all of the consequences of these alternatives: ‘They focus on some and ignore others. Relevant information about consequences is not sought, and available information is often not used’.

What are characteristic features of the inter-organizational coordination processes from this theoretical perspective?

Expected findings based on the instrumental-hierarchical perspective

1. That the reforms established a clear division of labour between the organizations.
2. That political and administrative leaders establish formal *inter-organizational* arenas for coordination. In addition, that the participants use these *inter-organizational* arenas to discuss cases, exchange information and make decisions. Further, that formal *inter-organizational* coordination affects actual *inter-organizational* coordination. Finally, *inter-organizational* coordination affects formal and actual *intra-organizational* coordination within the participating organizations.
3. That clear and formal goals established by politicians affect actual behaviour. Further, that goals are stable, as long as the political-administrative leadership does not alter the formal goals due to new preferences.
4. That formal steering affects behaviour in *inter-organizational* arenas, and that one organization has the *formal* lead responsibility for food safety issues.

5. That attitudes (positive versus negative), towards inter-organizational coordination and the degree of trust (low, medium, high), between the actors do *not* play a significant part in inter-organizational coordination processes.
6. That the number of participants is small and the participants are separated by a short geographical distance and/or have shared IT-systems.
7. That the outcome is *strong* coordination.

Formulating such expectations is a challenging task, because theoretical perspectives are broad frameworks that may involve several potential expectations. The point here is that the instrumental-hierarchical perspective assumes that organizational leaders design organizations and the links between organizations with the aim of achieving desired results. Therefore, leaders acting instrumentally give preference to, for example, clear goals, formal steering, and a clear division of labour within as well as between organizations. Instrumental leaders are more likely to view intra-organizational coordination as more beneficial than inter-organizational coordination, because it is much easier for a leader to handle. However, inter-organizational coordination may sometimes be necessary, and leaders therefore need to identify strategies to cope with challenges connected to such coordination, for example by focusing on inter-organizational meetings that facilitate information-sharing and decision-making.

2.7 The instrumental-negotiation perspective

The instrumental-hierarchical perspective and the instrumental-negotiation perspective share the assumption that the logic of consequence guides political and administrative behaviour. Still, the instrumental-hierarchical perspective focuses on leaders who pursue unified goals

and find both rational and unified means to achieve goals. However, actors frequently do not pursue unified goals or means, because they have differing views. The *instrumental-negotiation perspective* therefore asserts that organizations not are ‘unified actors’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a). Even though different actors may pursue different goals and interests, they may sometimes establish coalitions to ensure that their interests are taken into account in specific decision-making processes. Forming a coalition will be a useful strategy when single actors are weak if they work independently, but strong if they work collectively.

Resources are scarce in political systems. Actors require resources to achieve their goals, but diverging interests make the distribution of such resources difficult (Bolman and Deal 2007, pp. 212–213). The establishment of a coalition increases the chances of influencing concrete decisions made in decision-making processes, but requires negotiations between different actors to create a common political platform. ‘*Heterogeneity*’ and ‘*plurality*’ are important features of the instrumental-negotiation perspective. ‘Viewed from a negotiation-based instrumental perspective, deficiencies in carrying out reforms may stem from resistance to leaders’ plans for change from actors inside or outside the organization’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 123).

Power is an important aspect, and actors with time, money, administrative resources, competence and access to decision-making processes will be able to influence important decisions. Control over information will be an important source of power in such processes (Bolman and Deal 2007, chapter 9). According to the instrumental-negotiation perspective, the actors involved in inter-organizational processes do not use information in a neutral way. Rather, they use valuable information to promote their own interests, and do not present information that does not promote their interests. Therefore, actors with diverging interests frequently have different opinions regarding what is important information (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 145).

Conflicts between actors will often be a result of diverging interests and scarce resources, or a combination of these (Bolman and Deal 2007, p. 224). How do actors resolve such conflicts over different goals and interests? Christensen *et al.* (2007a, p. 30) focus on various solutions. First, a dominant coalition could use majority power to safeguard its interests and goals independently of other actors. Second, when there are no dominant coalitions, actors may resolve conflicts by compromise. Third, actors can focus on one goal or interest at a time. Such '*sequential attention*' to goals and interests reduces the focus on continual conflict resolution. Fourth, complex organizations may find that departments and sections may pursue different goals and interests. Although this could be a problem for the leadership of the organization, it could also promote efficiency. If the goals or interests are pursued independently of each other, i.e. flexibly, challenges may be resolved more quickly.

Political actors often take different views on situations, and present different arguments in relation to them (Bolman and Deal 2007). Situations in which actors disagree in their views can be labelled 'contested policy-making'. A more fundamental and deeper form of conflict arises in cases of 'contested governance', because the actors disagree about organizational structures and how to operate within formal structures. 'Contested governance' questions 'who should make decisions and where, how, and on what basis they should be made and implemented' (Ansell 2006, p. 329). In situations involving 'contested governance', the legitimacy of the system is questioned, and participation in inter-organizational coordination arenas may be difficult.

The instrumental-negotiation perspective asserts that negotiations, conflicts, diverging interests and scarce resources are primary features of political systems. Such features make inter-organizational procedures, rules and guidelines unstable, because these may be altered due to changes in the balance of power between single actors or between coalitions. In these circumstances, the most likely outcome of inter-organizational coordination processes will

be medium coordination, as compromises may be necessary to secure a result in a particular case. In addition, it could be argued that actors may show less enthusiasm in implementing decisions based on compromises than in implementing decisions matching the actors' original views.

What are characteristic features of the inter-organizational coordination processes from this theoretical perspective?

Expected findings based on the instrumental-negotiation perspective

1. That the reforms established a division of labour between the organizations. However, the division is subject to continuous negotiation, and that such negotiation affects the degree of clarity.
2. That political and administrative leaders establish formal *inter-organizational* coordination arenas to discuss cases and negotiate possible solutions. In addition, that *inter-organizational* coordination arenas affect, to some degree, actual inter-organizational coordination. Further, that inter-organizational coordination to some degree affects formal and actual intra-organizational coordination within the participating organizations.
3. That formal goals established by politicians affect actual behaviour. However, these goals are continuously renegotiated as the relative strength of actors will change. Further, that goals may be unclear (if actors need to make compromises), and unstable (if they are continuously altered by negotiations).
4. That formal steering to a certain degree affects behaviour in inter-organizational arenas, and one organization will have the *formal* lead responsibility after negotiations between relevant organizations.

5. That attitudes (positive versus negative), towards inter-organizational coordination and the degree of trust (low, medium, high), between the actors do *not* play a significant part in inter-organizational coordination processes, as these factors are influenced by formal positions.
6. That the number of participants is small and the participants are separated by a short geographical distance and/or have shared IT-systems.
7. That the outcome is *medium* coordination.

The point here is that organizational leaders act instrumentally, although several leaders may be involved in food safety issues. Therefore, each leader acts instrumentally, and conflicts may result if leaders pursue diverging interests. Finding a solution will then be difficult or impossible if not compromises can be made. Thus, actors pursuing diverging interests may weaken the link between formal organizational structures and actual effects.

2.8 The institutional-cultural perspective

‘The roots of political science are in the study of institutions’ (Peters 2001, p. 1). Peters argues that institutions have four characteristic requirements. First, every institution will need both formal and informal features to work efficiently. Second, such features need to be stable over a certain period. Third, these features need to influence individuals within the institutions. Fourth, the members of the institution need to share some core values (Peters 2001, p. 19). Values affect life within institutions, and function as ‘normative guidelines for appropriate attitudes and actions’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 80).

The two instrumental perspectives focus on organizations, but the two institutional perspectives focus on institutions. Such institutions have both formal and informal

organizational features. By contrast, organizations do not necessarily have institutional features. For example, an organization may not yet have a strong and developed culture shortly after being established.

Organization members always bring their personal experiences, attitudes and identities into an organization and such informal factors contribute to institutionalization (Selznick 1957, pp. 5–8). ‘As human beings and not mere tools they have their own needs for self-protection and self-fulfilment – needs that may either sustain the formal system or undermine it’ (Selznick 1957, p. 8).

Decision-makers frequently plan for the future, but unanticipated consequences may still arise, as it is difficult to take all factors and situations into consideration. Such ‘unanticipated consequences’ will reduce the chances of achieving desired goals (Pierson 2000, p. 483). Institutional theory may explain such unanticipated consequences. Egeberg (2003) distinguishes between formal and informal norms, and states that informal norms either strengthen formal norms or suppress them. From an institutional-cultural perspective, informal norms affect concrete actions by creating ‘*institutional features*’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 38).

Peters (2001) identifies six types of institutional theory, of which this dissertation employs only three in the discussion of inter-organizational coordination (The institutional-cultural perspective discusses two types and the institutional-myth perspective discusses one type). The first type of institutional theory, normative institutionalism, focuses on norms and values, and how such factors guide individual behaviour. March and Olsen (1989) have made important contributions to the understanding of normative institutionalism. They focused on the collective, rather than individual, roots of political science (Peters 2001). In addition, they pointed out that normative features have a greater influence on behaviour within an institution than coercive features. ‘Action is often based more on identifying the

normatively appropriate behaviour than on calculating the return expected from alternative choices' (March and Olsen 1989, p. 22). In other words, values are more important than rules. 'Rather than being guided by formal stated rules the members of institutions are more affected by the values contained within the organizations' (Peters 2001, p. 41).

'The logic of appropriateness' is a basic principle in normative institutionalism. 'This means that a person acts in accordance with his or her experience of what has worked well in the past, or upon what feels fair, reasonable and acceptable in the environment the person works within' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 3). Therefore, historical behaviour affects present behaviour. 'Political institutions are collections of interrelated rules and routines that define appropriate actions in terms of relations between roles and situations' (March and Olsen 1989, p. 160). This dissertation discusses normative institutionalism because norms and values are an important element in explanations of inter-organizational coordination processes.

Institutional actors have multiple identities. These may be rooted, for example, in their professional backgrounds or in the histories of the organizational departments to which they belong. 'Most actors have multiple identities, each defining a corresponding set of appropriate behaviours. However, actors in modern organizations will often encounter situations where several identities might be significant and thus potentially be activated' (Christensen and Røvik 2002, p. 176). Identities and rules will be matched differently in different situations. Accordingly, context is important in the logic of appropriateness. 'A cornerstone in the theory of appropriateness is the assumption that there are *rules* defining what is appropriate to do in given situations. But as with identities, actors regularly face situations with different and sometimes competing sets of rules of appropriate behaviour' (Christensen and Røvik 2002, pp. 176–177).

The second type of institutional theory, historical institutionalism, focuses on the basic principle of '*path dependency*'. 'This means that the cultural norms and values that make their mark on an organization in its early and formative years will have great significance for the path of development it follows' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 45). Therefore, institutions do not change easily, even though institutions in the environment can be a strong pressure for change (Christensen *et al.* 2007a).

According to Peters (2001, p. 75), historical institutionalism has close ties to normative institutionalism, 'given its tacit acceptance of "logics of appropriateness" in shaping behaviour'. This dissertation focuses on historical institutionalism because 'path dependency' may explain why reforms do not alter inter-organizational coordination processes.

One benefit of path dependency is stability: the organization can apply established rules and norms when dealing with different situations. However, these same rules and norms also mean that organizations often prove to be insufficiently flexible when radical and sudden situations require change. Changing environments make flexibility important. Path dependency can make institutions 'inefficient', i.e. mean that they do not respond easily and quickly to changing environmental circumstances (Egeberg 2003; Christensen *et al.* 2007a). Inflexibility may prove expensive when situations require sudden action. In addition, administrative reforms and programmes are accepted more easily if they are in accordance with the traditional administrative culture (Egeberg 2003).

How does change occur in historical institutionalism? On the one hand, change may be evolutionary. 'Historical institutionalism in this view implies a course of evolution, rather than a complete following of the initial pattern' (Peters 2001, p. 65). Evolutionary processes take time, and cultural features will affect the degree of change. 'If an organization is merely an instrument, it will be readily altered or cast aside when a more efficient tool becomes

available. Most organizations are thus expendable. When value-infusion takes place, however, there is a resistance to change' (Selznick 1957, pp. 18–19). According to Selznick (1957, p. 17), it takes time 'to *infuse with value* beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand'.

On the other hand, change may also sometimes take the form of radical change at 'critical junctures'. 'Changes are characterized as gradual adaptations centring around a state of equilibrium, punctuated by abrupt and powerful upheavals, and then followed by a new phase of small changes centred around a new state of equilibrium' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, pp. 134–135). Streeck and Thelen (2005, p. 9) distinguish between processes of change and the results of such processes. The processes may be either incremental or radical, and the result of change may be either continuity or discontinuity. Radical changes may lead institutions to shut down, while incremental changes will not do so. Nevertheless, a combination of several incremental changes over a long time may cause radical changes in the end.

Is it possible to design an organizational culture to achieve desired goals? Or is an organizational culture so unique and distinct that it is impossible to change it by instrumental design? Designing an organizational culture will often be difficult because cultural processes and features generally grow informally and naturally over time (Jamil 2005). Political and administrative leaders nevertheless focus on using cultural features actively when leading organizations. They may, for example, concentrate on socialization programmes when new civil servants enter a public organization. 'A design strategy presupposes that leaders have enough insight into the cultural changes needed, and also have at their disposal the means or devices as well as the power to carry them out' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 167). However, this is often easier in theory than in practice. Changing a structure is easier than changing a

culture, as it is difficult to express a culture's intangible features and tacit knowledge and link these to the structural features (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 167).

Political and administrative leaders introduce reforms to ensure achievement of goals. If reforms include several organizations, inter-organizational structures and cultures will frequently be changed. However, reforms frequently challenge existing organizational cultures, and may be considered inappropriate. It takes time before organization members regard new reforms, and the changes made by such reforms, as appropriate. What are characteristic features of the inter-organizational coordination processes from this theoretical perspective?

Expected findings based on the institutional-cultural perspective

1. That a reform was implemented, but the actual division of labour between the organizations grows naturally over time, due to *internal* pressure within the inter-organizational processes.
2. That inter-organizational coordination arenas have developed informally over time, rather than been established formally by political and administrative leaders. In addition, that participants use informal inter-organizational coordination arenas to discuss cases, exchange information, adjust mutually, and make decisions. Further, that informal inter-organizational coordination arenas that are *incompatible* with formal arenas may compete with them, and be loosely linked with actual inter-organizational behaviour. Moreover, that informal inter-organizational coordination arenas that are *compatible* with formal arenas may supplement them, and be closely linked with actual inter-organizational behaviour. Finally, that the compatible inter-organizational coordination arenas affect intra-organizational coordination arenas within the participating organizations.

3. That informal goals affect actual behaviour. Further, that goals are stable in the short term, but unstable in the long term, because goals develop naturally and therefore change over time.
4. That informal leadership affects behaviour, and that relevant actors have *not* decided formally that one organization should have the formal lead responsibility for food safety.
5. That attitudes (positive versus negative), towards inter-organizational coordination and the degree of trust (low, medium, high), between the actors *play a significant* part in inter-organizational coordination arenas, because formal positions do not determine all types of behaviour in inter-organizational arenas.
6. That coordination is promoted when the number of participants is small and the participants are separated by a short geographical distance and/or have shared IT-systems.
7. That the outcome is *strong* coordination when formal and informal inter-organizational processes are compatible and *weak* coordination when formal inter-organizational processes are incompatible with informal ones.

The point here is that organizational leaders do *not* control everything within an organization, or all interaction between organizations, or the results the organization produces. Informal features, such as goals, decision-making and general behaviour may strengthen formal and instrumental behaviour, or challenge it if the leaders pursue goals or interests that test core values of the organizational culture. Therefore, organizational culture can either strengthen or weaken the link between reforms and effects.

2.9 The institutional-myth perspective

Peters (2001) identifies six types of institutional theory, of which the institutional-myth perspective employs only one in the discussion of inter-organizational coordination; sociological institutionalism, which focuses on various elements, including population ecology. 'The fundamental premise of the population ecology approach is that organizations (or institutions) and their behaviour can be understood in part through an analogy with populations of biological organisms' (Peters 2001, p. 101).

Sociological institutionalism also focuses on institutional processes and isomorphism. Meyer and Rowan (1977) and DiMaggio and Powel (1991) have contributed to the understanding of these concepts. 'One question that emerges from this literature is why relatively similar forms of institutions emerge in very different social and political settings' (Peters 2001, p. 103). This dissertation discusses sociological institutionalism, because it is relevant to an understanding of how ideas in the environment affect the organization of food safety. For example, in recent years several countries have established agencies to handle food safety issues (Rykkja 2008a).

Institutional environments may influence how organizations design organizational structures (Meyer and Rowan 1977; DiMaggio and Powel 1983; Røvik 2007). 'Myths are more or less clear recipes for how to design an organization' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 59). Such myths can have important effects on how organizations structure activities and processes both within and between organizations. 'A key conception is that organizations operate within institutional environments where they are confronted with socially created norms for how they should be designed and how they should function' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 57).

Why do organizations need to deal with such myths? 'Public organizations attain legitimacy by deploying organizational reform methods and solutions regarded as modern

and acceptable by the environment at a given period in time' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 124). However, institutions in the environment may express different expectations to an organization. 'An organization is therefore confronted with many different, often inconsistent and changing ideas and recipes for legitimate structures and procedures' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 58).

What kinds of strategies for dealing with such myths will be available to organizations? Organizations frequently employ three strategies: 'quick couplings', 'rejections' and 'decouplings' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a; Røvik 2007). A 'quick coupling' is an implementation of myths in an organization, where they then have instrumental effects. A 'rejection' describes a situation where myths meet resistance, and therefore have no instrumental effects. One reason for rejection is that myths may be incompatible with the organizational culture. A 'decoupling' occurs when an organization adopts myths superficially, without implementing them in the organization. On the surface, organizations are modern, but actual practices have not changed (DiMaggio and Powel 1983; Christensen *et al.* 2007a). Therefore, myths have no instrumental effects. 'A sharp distinction should [therefore] be made between the formal structure of an organization and its actual day-to-day work activities' (Meyer and Rowan 1977, p. 341).

One similarity between cultural features (the institutional-cultural perspective) and myths (the institutional-myth perspective) is that they are both products of 'natural developmental processes'. Such processes will often take place over some time. 'Nevertheless, cultural processes may be distinguished from myth processes because they lead to distinctness or uniqueness, while myth processes lead to isomorphy or similarity between organizations, at least superficially' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 171). By contrast, external processes in the form of myths may create homogeneity across organizations. DiMaggio and Powel (1983, p. 147) ask: '*What makes organizations so similar?*' Their

answer is an important contribution to the explanation of the processes that lead to greater similarity.

Isomorphism takes three forms. First, ‘coercive isomorphism’ describes the situation where an organization is able to exert pressure on other organizations due to having extensive resources, and these other organizations then adapt to the stronger organization. Second, ‘mimetic isomorphism’ can be an option if uncertainty is to be avoided. Third, ‘normative isomorphism’ describes the situation where professional norms exert influence on how processes are organized (DiMaggio and Powel 1983).

Meyer and Rowan (1977, p. 340) also focus on isomorphism. ‘Organizations whose structures become isomorphic with the myths of the institutional environment – in contrast with those primarily structured by the demands of technical production and exchange – decrease internal coordination and control in order to maintain legitimacy’. What are the consequences of isomorphism? Some potential effects on organizations are that: ‘(a) they incorporate elements which are legitimated externally, rather than in terms of efficiency; (b) they employ external or ceremonial assessment criteria to define the value of structural elements; and (c) dependence on externally fixed institutions reduces turbulence and maintains stability’ (Meyer and Rowan 1977, pp. 348–349). What are characteristic features of the inter-organizational coordination processes from this theoretical perspective?

Expected findings based on the institutional-environmental perspective

1. That a reform was implemented, but the actual division of labour between organizations will develop naturally over time due to *external* pressure from the environment.
2. That political and administrative leaders establish formal, but superficial *inter-organizational* coordination arenas. Further, that *inter-organizational* arenas are

produced from recipes taken from the environment, and are either *rejected* or *decoupled* from actual behaviour, merely functioning as ‘window-dressing’. Moreover, that *inter-organizational* therefore do *not* affect either actual *inter-organizational* coordination arenas or formal or actual *intra-organizational* coordination.

3. That informal goals affect actual behaviour. Furthermore, that goals may be unstable because of pressure from the environment.
4. That informal leadership affects behaviour in inter-organizational arenas, and that relevant actors have *not* decided formally that one organization should have the formal lead responsibility for food safety.
5. That informal leadership affects behaviour in inter-organizational arenas.
6. That attitudes (positive versus negative), towards inter-organizational coordination and the degree of trust (low, medium, high), between the actors *play a significant* part in inter-organizational coordination processes, because formal positions do not determine all kinds of behaviour in inter-organizational arenas.
7. That the number of participants is small and the participants are separated by a short geographical distance and/or have shared IT-systems.
8. That the outcome is *weak* coordination.

The point here is that the environment will influence both how organizations act together and the inter-organizational coordination processes they create. For example, post-NPM focuses on new working methods such as building networks across organizations. The use of networks may reduce fragmentation. Such methods may ensure greater legitimacy even if the organizations involved do not use the methods instrumentally to solve actual problems by finding new solutions.

In addition, both in Norway and in New Zealand, the organizations involved in food safety have to relate to various international organizations, such as the European Union and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). (Norway is not a member of the EU, but is a member of the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA).) The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and Codex are also relevant. Such international organizations may influence how organizations act together. Moreover, the OECD has influenced organizational features in several countries: ‘The Organisation provides a setting where governments compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practice and coordinate domestic and international policies’ (OECD 2010).

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the concept of coordination by reference to various theoretical perspectives. Expectations have been presented for each theoretical perspective. The table below summarises the expectations attached to each theoretical perspective.

Factors	The instrumental-hierarchical perspective	The instrumental-negotiation perspective	The institutional-cultural perspective	The institutional-myth perspective
Division of labour	Clear and preestablished	Negotiated	Grows naturally over time (internal pressure)	Grows naturally over time (external pressure)
Meeting arenas	Formal and regular	Formal and negotiated	Informal and ad hoc	Formally presented, but rejected or decoupled
Goals	Clear and formal	Unclear and negotiated	Informal	Informal
Leadership/steering	Steering	Steering	Leadership	Leadership
Attitudes and trust	Not relevant	Not relevant	Highly Relevant	Highly Relevant
Geographical distance/the number of organizations involved	Relevant	Relevant	Relevant	Relevant
Outcome	Strong	Medium	Strong or weak	Weak

Table 1: Inter-organizational coordination from the four theoretical perspectives.

3. Methods and design challenges

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses methods and design challenges. Since methods and study design can influence findings, it is important to document methods and discuss design challenges. This chapter therefore focuses on the following elements: First, this chapter outlines definitions of case studies. Second, the chapter discusses strengths and weaknesses of using case studies. Third, challenges inherent in measuring effects are discussed. Fourth, options for selecting cases are illustrated. Fifth, an overview is provided of the strengths and weaknesses of using interviews and document studies to obtain data, and there is discussion of how to decide who the respondents should be. Sixth, both the congruence method and process-tracing are explained, and reasons are given for the use of these methods in this dissertation. Seventh, the concept of analytical generalization is outlined.

3.2 What is a case study?

Hartley (2004, pp. 323–324) defines a case study as a research strategy, rather than a research method, because the researcher often employs several methods within the case-study framework. Such methods may include direct observation, document studies and interviews. Lijpart (1971) identifies case studies as one of four possible types of research design. The main research strategy used in this dissertation is case studies that compare inter-organizational coordination of food safety issues in Norway and New Zealand. ‘A *case study* may be understood as the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that

study is – at least in part – to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population)’ (Gerring 2007, p. 20). In a case study, the researcher often focuses intensively on many different aspects of a phenomenon. This dissertation selects specific food safety organizations as cases for study, and singles out inter-organizational coordination for in-depth analysis.

George and Bennett (2005, p. 5) also stress some of the same features as Gerring, and define a case study as ‘the detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events...’. Researchers want to gain both more knowledge about the specific case and more knowledge about other cases within the population from which the case is taken (Andersen 1997; Andersen 2007). Gerring (2007, p. 20) distinguishes between a ‘case study (comprising one or few cases)’ and a ‘cross-case study (comprising many cases)’. This dissertation comprises only two cases, and therefore falls into Gerring’s first category.

Case studies require information about the context. Contextual information is typically a prerequisite for the study of individual cases, and the precise relations between a phenomenon and its context will frequently be difficult to define (Yin 1994, p. 13). The study of inter-organizational coordination highlights the close integration of case and context: it is difficult to establish clear boundaries between, for example, inter-organizational coordination processes and other activities, which tie such coordination processes into a broader organizational context.

3.3 Strengths and weaknesses of using case studies as the strategy

Case studies have various strengths. What are the strengths of case studies compared to other methods? First, ‘[c]ase studies are generally strong precisely where statistical methods and formal models are weak’ (George and Bennett 2005, p. 19). By contrast, statistical methods

are generally strong where case studies are weak. Therefore, such methods could supplement each other, rather than compete. Qualitative case studies can also be used as a preparation for future quantitative studies.

Second, they are strong in comparing inter-organizational structures and cultures, and how inter-organizational coordination processes operate within such structures and cultures in different countries, such as Norway and New Zealand. The study of inter-organizational coordination processes often requires case studies, because such studies allow historical processes to be identified and traced. Further, case studies have a long history in the study of organizations, and processes that take place within and between organizations. This long history makes further studies important, to ensure cumulative competence.

Third, case studies have strengths in relation to ensuring ‘conceptual validity’ (George and Bennett 2005, p. 19). For example, the complexity of the concept of inter-organizational coordination makes it difficult to measure in quantitative, large-‘N’ studies, because it can be unclear to the interview respondents what the researcher means by inter-organizational coordination. If the respondents do not understand the term, the researcher must clarify it for them. Asking follow-up questions and ensuring that the respondents understand the questions guarantees more precise answers. In this dissertation, such clarification was given to avoid misunderstandings. Where, as in this dissertation, in-depth interviews are used, a very limited number of cases is required in order to tap into the processes of the particular organizations, and establish whether inter-organizational coordination is fully operationalized. Case studies are therefore more effective at ensuring ‘conceptual validity’ than quantitative, large-‘N’ studies.

Fourth, case studies and large-‘N’ studies often have different focuses, which correspond to the respective strengths of the two methods. ‘Case study researchers are more interested in finding the conditions under which specified outcomes occur, and the

mechanisms through which they occur, rather than uncovering the frequency with which those conditions and their outcomes arise' (George and Bennett 2005, p. 31). This dissertation aims to identify such conditions for inter-organizational coordination, and what kinds of factors that prevent or promote inter-organizational coordination.

Fifth, case studies are strong in identifying causal mechanisms (Andersen 2007; Gerring 2007), i.e. they feature 'independent stable factors that under certain conditions link causes to effects' (George and Bennett 2005, p. 8). Identifying such conditions helps to generate new knowledge about inter-organizational coordination processes and outcomes. Focusing on causal mechanisms also strengthens the internal validity of the analysis, something which is typically identified as strength of case studies (Gerring 2007, pp. 43–46).

Sixth, case studies are strong in relation to generating new hypotheses and theoretical expectations. Statistical studies, by contrast, are not as good at this (Gerring 2007). 'Statistical methods can identify deviant cases that may lead to new hypotheses, but in and of themselves these methods lack any clear means of actually identifying new hypotheses' (George and Bennett 2005, p. 21). The findings developed in this dissertation could be used to design future quantitative surveys. Observations from one case study could be used as hypotheses for both other case studies and cross-case statistical studies. A division of labour between case studies and statistical studies enables the development and testing of knowledge within a given research domain. Quantitative surveys about inter-organizational coordination processes and outcomes can supplement the knowledge that has already been obtained through case-study interviews.

Seventh, case studies are strong in measuring complex processes, for example inter-organizational coordination. Understanding such complex processes often requires contextual knowledge, and case studies have strength as regards providing such knowledge. Complex processes vary from country to country, and over time within individual countries.

Case studies will therefore have the advantage in measuring complexity, because complexity often has qualitative elements, and case studies are efficient at identifying these. Further, combining different methods, such as interviews and document studies, within the case-study framework ensures a better understanding of complexity. For example, Norway and New Zealand have selected different organizational structures for food safety issues, and also have different reform traditions. Nevertheless, the two countries display similarities in their focus on inter-organizational coordination processes of food safety issues.

Gerring (2007, p. 49) argues that case studies offer great opportunities to study empirical ‘depth’, i.e. ‘the detail, richness, completeness, wholeness, or the degree of variance in an outcome that is accounted for by an explanation’. In this dissertation, the fact that interviews were conducted with people involved in the inter-organizational coordination processes of food safety issues allowed investigation of various aspects of how such coordination works in practice.

What are the weaknesses of case studies compared to other methods? First, bias in the selection of cases can be a weakness, for example when cases are selected on the basis of dependent variables¹. However, such bias is not a problem in this dissertation. As Norway and New Zealand have chosen to deal with food safety issues through very different organizational structures, the selection of the two cases is in reality based on differences in the *independent* variable, rather than the dependent variable.

Second, case studies are weaker than quantitative studies at measuring causal effects of reforms (Andersen 2007). Causal effects have been defined as ‘(a) the magnitude of a causal relationship (the expected effect on Y of a given change in X across a population of cases) and (b) the relative precision or uncertainty of that point estimate’ (Gerring 2007, p. 44). A weakness may be that case studies normally do not enable the researcher to measure

¹ See for example Andersen 1997, pp. 96–97; George and Bennett 2005, pp. 22–23.

the precise impact of a given variable: ‘A limitation of case studies is that they can make only tentative conclusions on *how much* gradations of a particular variable affect the outcome in a particular case or how much they generally contribute to the outcomes in a class or type of cases’ (George and Bennett 2005, p. 25).

This dissertation seeks to reduce the problem of gradation by employing relatively broad categories – strong, medium and weak. Categorizing the empirical material will always be a challenge, as coordination is a difficult concept to measure, both for the researcher and for the interview respondents. Nevertheless, as categorizing the empirical material enables the researcher to identify trends, doing so has been important in this dissertation.

The combination of a small number of observations and qualitative data makes it difficult to isolate variables. A study will often require the isolation of variables, as isolation enables examination of the links between a reform and changes in the operation of inter-organizational coordination processes within inter-organizational structures and cultures. Such ‘comparison’ makes it possible to study inter-organizational coordination processes across space and time (Gerring 2007, pp. 164–168).

Third, representativeness may be a weakness of case studies, as it is impossible to draw statistical inferences relating to the whole population from the sample examined in a case study. However, ‘analytical generalization’ may be an alternative to ‘statistical generalization’ (Andersen 1997). Such generalization will be discussed in the final part of this chapter.

Fourth, a further weakness may be observed in case studies, in which cases are not independent of each other. Independence is necessary to ensure that the conclusions are not based on generalizations containing analytical errors (See for example George and Bennett 2005, p. 33). The two cases of Norway and New Zealand are independent. It is unlikely that

the political and administrative leaders of the two countries sought inspiration from each other when designing organizational structures to deal with food safety issues, because the countries have selected so different organizational structures. Accordingly, lack of independence is not a problem in this dissertation.

Fifth, another weakness may be that case studies are better at generating hypotheses than at testing them. ‘Theory testing is not the case study’s strong suit’ (Gerring 2007, p. 42). However, there is a possible middle way: theory refinement. This is a useful approach, as case studies do not often ‘refute a theory decisively’. Rather, case studies are able to ‘identify whether and how the scope conditions of competing theories should be expanded or narrowed’ (George and Bennett 2005, p. 115).

Further, the simplicity or complexity of causal relations determines how a researcher should analyze the test results. ‘For example, theories that posit simple causal relations, such as necessity, sufficiency, or linearity can be falsified by a single case (barring measurement error). Theories are harder to test if they posit more complex causal relations, such as equifinality and interaction effects’ (George and Bennett 2005, p. 116). In this dissertation, the comparison of Norway and New Zealand forms a basis for the development of theoretical expectations. Testing of the scope conditions for these expectations will make it possible eventually to refine them for further study.

3.4 Measurement of effects

Christensen *et al.* (2007a, p. 149) highlight several situations in which it could be ‘difficult to measure the effects’ of reforms. In this dissertation, ‘effects’ means how food safety reforms affect inter-organizational structures and cultures, and how inter-organizational food safety coordination processes operate within such inter-organizational structures and

cultures. The outcome of such processes may be strong, medium or weak coordination. This dissertation measures effects in two concrete cases; organization of food safety issues in Norway and organization of food safety issues in New Zealand.

Why select this strategy? Using case studies to measure effects produces increased and qualitative knowledge about the links between different case studies and the effects of reforms. Further, the measurement of effects requires information and knowledge about the contexts in which they occur, and such contextual information is easier to obtain through qualitative case studies than quantitative surveys. This dissertation therefore concentrates on measuring causal effects using case studies.

First, interview respondents may lack motivation to become a part of a study. 'Independent evaluations can be interpreted as threatening to political and administrative leaders' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 149). This does not seem to be a great problem in this dissertation, as the interview respondents have been very positive towards participation. Moreover, several interview respondents have recommended asking follow-up questions subsequent to the interviews. Nevertheless, the researcher experienced some difficulties in this dissertation in relation to making appointments, as several interview respondents had very busy schedules. Further, one person within the NFSA and two individuals within the NZFSA did not respond. Interviewing these individuals could have provided additional information and/or additional perspectives on inter-organizational coordination. However, this dissertation includes several other respondents who provided valuable information and perspectives.

Second, the researcher has to be independent of the interview respondents and their organizations (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 150). This does not present a problem in this dissertation, as the researcher was independent of both the interview respondents and the organizations they represent. The researcher did not know any of the interview respondents

personally when the interviews were conducted. Although the researcher held a position as an adviser to the Norwegian MAF for six months while working on this dissertation, the interviews were completed before the researcher took up this post (with the exception of a following-up interview with Gunnar Hagen on e-mail after accepting, but not starting in, the position as an advisor). The researcher has participated in the inter-organizational coordination meeting arenas between the three ministries, and the meeting arenas between the ministries and the food safety agency, and this could suggest an observer-actor problem. However, this problem has not arisen, for two reasons. First, it takes a long time to establish a very strong identity linked to one particular organization. The researcher only worked in the MAF in Norway for approximately six months. Second, the researcher was aware of the potential challenge when completing the dissertation.

Third, a frequent problem is that ‘there are often *manifold criteria* for evaluating results, all of which are *conflicting, unclear and unstable*’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 150). Further, criteria will often change over time, which makes it difficult to measure the links between empirical features and criteria (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 151). Such criteria for evaluating results are discussed in chapters 6 and 7, and will not be discussed further in this chapter.

Fourth, timing can be a problem in effect studies. ‘If effects are measured shortly after an initiative has been launched, the measurements will pertain mainly to the adaptation process’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 151). However, allowing a long time to pass between implementation and measurement increases the chances of new reforms and changes occurring in the meantime. Any new reforms will make it difficult to measure the effects of the original reform (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 151). In Norway, the interview process started in 2007, three years after the implementation of the reform in 2004. Three years will frequently be enough time to ensure stable long-term effects.

In New Zealand, the interview process started in 2008, only one year after the implementation of the reform in 2007. One year may be too short a period to measure stable effects, and there is therefore a risk of the dissertation measuring the effects of the adoption process. To mitigate this pitfall, the researcher conducted several follow-up interviews in 2009 by e-mail. Two years between a reform and measurement of effects may increase the chances of measuring stable effects. The researcher also took the length of the period into account when formulating the conclusions in this dissertation.

Fifth, measuring dependent variables seems to be a challenge, because such variables are frequently difficult to specify in quantitative terms. Such dependent variables are often complex. The intermediate variables in this dissertation are actual inter-organizational coordination processes and the dependent variable is the outcome of those inter-organizational processes. In measuring outcomes, this dissertation employs relatively broad categories – weak, medium and strong coordination – to ensure greater validity. Using a larger number of categories would make evaluation more difficult, since coordination in itself is a very difficult concept to measure.

Sixth, when several changes or reforms are implemented after a rather short amount of time, researchers may take the problem of attribution into account. Isolating causes and effects may therefore be a particular challenge (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, pp. 151–152). To reduce this problem will not be easy since researchers do not control when and how reforms are implemented. However, the researcher needs to discuss such methodology problems in detail if they appear, so the reader can have the last word in determining how plausible the conclusions are.

3.5 Selection of cases

The selection of cases should also be linked to the research objective. ‘A clear, well-reasoned statement of the research problem will generate and focus the investigation’ (George and Bennett 2005, p. 74). This dissertation started with several research topics connected to food safety, such as: ‘inter-organizational coordination of food safety issues’, ‘organization of food safety issues’, ‘achievement of food safety goals’, ‘cost efficiency’, ‘separation of politics and administration’, and ‘conditions for political and administrative steering’.

After some time, the researcher reduced the number of topics by focusing on ‘inter-organizational structures and cultures, and how inter-organizational coordination operates within such structures and cultures’, on the grounds that such coordination is a challenge in both New Zealand and Norway. In addition, a study of inter-organizational coordination of food safety issues could increase knowledge about such coordination.

The cases included in this dissertation have been selected on the basis of variation in the *independent* variables, consistent with the ‘*diverse-case* method’ (Gerring 2007, p. 98). ‘Encompassing a full range of variation is likely to enhance the representativeness of the sample of cases chosen by the researcher’ (Gerring 2007, p. 100). The diverse-case method is consistent with the ‘most different system design’, in those cases with similar independent variables are selected. However, in this dissertation it was impossible to know whether the dependent variables of the cases showed similarity before the comparison was made between Norway and New Zealand. Therefore, the design selected was not based on the ‘most different system design’.

The selection of a case or cases is an important part of the design strategy. ‘In the most elementary sense, the design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions’ (Yin 1994, p. 19).

Therefore, the design is an important factor in every research project. An insufficiently developed design makes answering questions very difficult (George and Bennett 2005, pp. 73–74).

Researchers should select cases on the basis of conscious designs, which often require new data (George and Bennett 2005, p. 83). Therefore, such designs often demand extensive resources. In the literature, several researchers of food safety issues focus on general organizational features. However, few researchers focus systematically on inter-organizational coordination of such food safety issues. Accordingly, there was a need for new data about inter-organizational structures, cultures and coordination processes and outcomes in both countries.

George and Bennett (2005, p. 67) identify the benefits and logicity of ‘structured, focused comparison’. Being ‘structured’ means formulating various conscious questions that the interview respondents have to answer in the selected cases. To be ‘focused’ means to pay attention to only one or a few aspects of the selected cases. Since this dissertation concentrates on inter-organizational coordination, and the data are taken from interviews conducted on the basis of an interview guide containing pre-formulated questions, the dissertation fits the ‘structured, focused comparison’ design.

George and Bennett (2005) use insights of Harry Eckstein to select cases based on expectations derived from theories. ‘Many case study researchers have identified the cases they choose for study as most-likely or least-likely cases, but it is necessary to be explicit and systematic in determining this status’ (George and Bennett 2005, p. 121). The most-likely case is one in which the predictions of a theory are very likely to be validated. If they are not, this is seen as strong evidence of the disconfirmation of that theory. The least-likely case refers to the opposite situation, where a case is unlikely to fully validate the theoretical predictions. If it does, the credibility of the theory has been bolstered (Gerring 2007, pp.

115–121). ‘In general, the strongest possible supporting evidence for a theory is a case that is least likely for that theory but most likely for all alternative theories, and one where the alternative theories collectively predict an outcome very different from that of the least-likely theory’ (George and Bennett 2005, p. 121).

This dissertation seeks to evaluate the cases as most-likely or least-likely on the basis of the four competing theoretical perspectives. The instrumental-hierarchical perspective predicts strong coordination as an outcome of inter-organizational coordination processes, while the instrumental-negotiation perspective predicts medium coordination. The institutional-myth perspective predicts weak coordination. By contrast, the institutional-cultural perspective predicts strong coordination when formal and informal inter-organizational processes are *compatible*, but weak coordination when such processes are *incompatible*. Accordingly, the theoretical perspectives are consistent in predicating the outcome variation from strong to weak. This makes it possible to predict outcomes that exclude outcomes under the other theories, although the four theories do not totally exclude each other (see chapter two for more details).

The comparative approach is a productive strategy (Lijphart 1971, Frendreis 1983²). ‘By making the researcher aware of unexpected differences, or even surprising similarities, between cases, comparison brings a sense of perspective to a familiar environment and discourages parochial responses to political issues’ (Hopkin 2002, p. 249). Even though the comparative approach may present challenges, securing both general and specific knowledge about organizational features requires the comparison of cases (Hopkin 2002, p. 251).

Norway and New Zealand appear good candidates for comparison. Their populations are of a quite similar size, they face similar challenges in several policy fields, and they have quite similar state-sector traditions, ‘concerning both cultural values and the structure of

² Lijphart focuses on ‘the most similar systems’ as a design strategy. In contrast, Frendreis focuses on a ‘mixed approach’ a resolution of the debate between the proponents of ‘the most similar systems’ on the one hand, and ‘the most different systems’ design strategy on the other hand.

central civil service' (Christensen 2001, p. 459). Although Norway and New Zealand have selected different reform paths the last 25 years, with New Zealand's reforms generally being more radical than those of Norway, both countries have implemented sweeping food safety reforms in recent years. Norway implemented a food safety reform in 2004, and New Zealand did the same in 2002 and 2007. However, the fact that Norway and New Zealand have selected very different formal organizational structures ensures variation in the independent variables. Such variation makes comparison fruitful, and also makes it possible to identify how inter-organizational coordination processes operate in different inter-organizational structures and cultures. Despite selecting very different organizational structures, both countries focus on inter-organizational coordination processes.

However, one disadvantage of studying New Zealand is that the researcher in this dissertation is more familiar with the Norwegian organizational context than that of New Zealand. However, the researcher has compensated for this by asking the interview respondents various questions about the political context of New Zealand.

3.6 Data - interviews and documents

This dissertation incorporates two main types of data: documents and answers from respondent interviews. Documents represent important sources of information about organizational structures. Information was gathered from parliamentary propositions and various evaluation reports, produced by both internal and external actors. Documents can also help researchers to formulate relevant questions for an interview guide. Researchers should always combine different documents in order to include as much potentially valuable information as possible.

Nevertheless, documents should always be combined with interviews, because such interviews often provide much information in case studies (Yin 1994, p. 84). This dissertation is based on 29 respondent interviews conducted in Norway and New Zealand (see respondent list). Interviews paint a richer and more realistic picture than documents, for several reasons.

First, documents may be formulated so as to present an ideal picture and to hide potential tensions and conflicts, or the reasons for implementing reforms. However, evaluation reports frequently reveal such tensions and conflicts, and other important challenges. For example, the report on the *E.coli* contamination in Norway in 2006 revealed problems with coordination between different levels of the NFSA (Report 2006a).

Second, respondent interviews are important sources of information about informal inter-organizational processes and cultural issues. Such processes and issues are frequently not described in formal documents, with the exception of evaluation reports. Although researchers will generally not have direct insight into the conduct of such evaluations, they will be able to gain a clearer overview if an evaluation report contains lists of interview respondents and the questions asked during interviews. This kind of information is important to ensure greater validity.

A researcher needs to focus on both reliability and validity. First, reliability measures the credibility of the empirical material. Second, validity measures the relevance of the empirical material to the questions in the research project (Andersen 2006; Andersen 2007). The researcher conducting this dissertation employed a tape recorder to ensure exact information and to avoid misconceptions in the interview process. Avoiding such misconceptions may be a challenge without a tape recorder. However, using a tape recorder may be a good strategy. Such a strategy also ensures reliability.

In addition, the researcher used an interview guide with relevant questions. Further, asking the respondents some of the same questions, by using an interview guide, enabled comparison across various respondents. Still, in order to gather additional information not covered by the original interview guide, some questions were changed during the interview process. On the one hand, these changes could pose a threat to the comparative quality of the interview data. On the other hand, minor adjustments to the interview guide should also enhance validity by facilitating greater depth during interviews. Such changes illustrate the flexibility, which is one of the strengths of the semi-structured-interview method.

As a primary method, interviews present both advantages and disadvantages (King 2004, pp. 20–21). The advantages include identifying the perceptions of core organization members, for example leaders at different levels. Such perceptions are easier to identify in interviews than in quantitative surveys, because the interviewer is able to ask the interview respondents to elaborate on the context of inter-organizational coordination processes.

In addition, gathering information about communication lines and inter-organizational coordination processes frequently requires respondent interviews, because such information is not accessible on the internet or in other written sources. To gain a complete picture, therefore, a researcher needs to ask questions about matters during the respondent interviews. Such information is not easy to obtain through quantitative surveys, as complex processes have both informal and formal features, and participants may be working on several inter-organizational processes simultaneously. Moreover, researchers who analyze identities, loyalties and meaning in organizations may find that qualitative interviewing generates the best results, because it may sometimes be difficult to ask questions about such matters in a quantitative survey (King 2004).

The disadvantages of the interview method include that qualitative respondent interviews frequently take a long time. Moreover, researchers have to be flexible, as

interview respondents will often be engaged in many activities at the same time, and a long time may pass between an inquiry and the actual interview (King 2004).

In addition, a respondent may prefer to answer questions as part of a quantitative survey, because a survey can be completely anonymized. By contrast, in a qualitative respondent interview, the researcher and the respondent interact, and the respondent will not be anonymous. Of course, a researcher should not use quotes from an interview without the permission of the respondent, and should be extra careful in connection with controversial issues, personnel cases or conflicts within and between organizations. Publishing issues linked to specific persons may subsequently cause those persons problems. This dissertation only includes quotes that have been approved by the respondents. Some respondents wanted to change a few quotes, because quotes from a conversation may sound less professional than quotes from a written document. However, these respondents did not alter the content of the quotes, merely making them more reader-friendly and less colloquial.

A further disadvantage of interviews is that respondents may answer questions in a way that is regarded as 'politically correct', to portray a positive image of the organization or respondent in question. However, the researcher in this dissertation believes that the interview respondents were quite honest and sincere, showing a commitment to providing a realistic picture. In addition, this dissertation focuses on inter-organizational coordination, and does not evaluate personal relationships or mistakes. This made it easier to interview the respondents.

To ensure a comparative perspective, a researcher should ask some of the same questions of the respondents in the different case studies. Then, the results could be 'compared, cumulated and systematically analyzed' (George and Bennett 2005, p. 86). Nevertheless, interview respondents have different roles and positions, and some questions are more relevant in certain interviews than in others. In addition, the interview respondents

may interpret the questions differently, depending on their specific personal contexts. Accordingly, the personal contexts may affect how these respondents assess coordination.

How should a researcher select interview respondents? Dalen (2004, p. 51) argues that the researcher needs to take several factors into account. First, the researcher needs to decide how many respondents should be interviewed. Including many interview respondents would increase the complexity of the empirical material, and the researcher could lose sight of important aspects. However, having a small number of interview respondents could lead the researcher to conclusions that do not take account of actual variation. In such situations, the researcher may overlook important nuances. The quality of the conclusions may then be challenged on the grounds that there were too few respondents. Therefore, the researcher should interview a satisfactory number of respondents. However, the researcher must determine the number of interview respondents even though it is no absolute answer to this question.

Having ‘the feeling of data overload’ makes it difficult for a researcher to handle data (King 2004, p. 21). However, the researcher can avoid such ‘overload’ by adopting a clear strategy, which should include asking the same questions of several respondents and having clear expectations based on theory. The researcher will then have a clear perception of what kind of information he or she needs to be able to answer the research questions.

In this dissertation, 29 interviews were conducted for the purpose of gaining a picture of inter-organizational coordination and organizational structures in the two cases of Norway and New Zealand. This can be regarded as ‘many’ interviews. A tape recorder ensured the preservation of information. At several points during the research process, the tape recorder was used to ensure that information was correctly understood, or to compare the perceptions of relevant interview respondents. The tape recorder also enabled the many interviews to be managed. A researcher can easily lose important information by not saving data, as it is

difficult to take detailed notes during respondent interviews. One challenge, however, may be that more interviews were conducted in Norway than in New Zealand. Therefore, more data are available for Norway than for New Zealand. Nevertheless, the number of interviews conducted in New Zealand should be sufficient to enable analysis of coordination between the ministries.

Second, the researcher needs to decide who the interview respondents should be (Dalen 2004, p. 51). Esterberg (2002, p. 93) recommends selection of interview respondents with 'the greatest possible insight'. Sometimes, a researcher may find it difficult to select respondents, and to decide which criteria to use. A research project must always have criteria for selecting interview respondents if a systematic research design is to be achieved. In addition, the researcher must have knowledge about the case in question before the respondents are selected. Acquiring such knowledge often takes some time, and requires the researcher to read public documents to identify relevant questions.

Furthermore, members of an organization with significant insight or historical experience and information will often contribute materially to important processes. However, new members may also bring new perspectives into an organization. Variation in the age of interview respondents is therefore important to ensure coverage of different perspectives across the age range. Most of the interview respondents in this dissertation fall into the age range 40 to 60.

In this dissertation, interview respondents were selected using the websites of the relevant organizations. Most public and state-sector organizations publish large amounts of information on their websites, making website searches an effective strategy for finding both relevant interview respondents and their contact details (addresses, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers). During the interview process, several interview respondents mentioned other persons relevant to this dissertation. This proved to be very useful to the researcher.

Accordingly, researchers should be alert to this possibility during interviews. In addition, many leaders have only superficial knowledge of specific cases, and may therefore refer researchers to other relevant persons who can provide further information and details upon request.

Repstad (2007) focuses on the ‘context’ of interview situations, in which both the collective and the individual experiences of the interview respondents are important. For example, if several civil servants share a common professional and/or educational background, the chances are greater that this background will affect their attitudes and perspectives. Accordingly, the attitudes and perspectives of the interview respondents must be analyzed by reference to the context. However, civil servants who have worked in an organization, such as a ministry, for a long time, often find that they have undergone a socialization process through which the influence of education has diminished over time (Egeberg 2003).

Esterberg (2002, p. 85) distinguishes between different kinds of interviews. ‘There are several types of interviews, including structured, semistructured, and unstructured. Interviews vary according to the amount of control exerted by the researcher during the interview and to the degree of structure’. Structured interviews are a very formal type of interview: ‘the sequence of questions and the pace of the interview tend to be preestablished’ (Esterberg 2002, p. 85). Most questions asked during a structured interview are ‘close-ended’ rather than ‘open-ended’. This strategy facilitates comparison of answers, but can make it harder to ask follow-up questions. ‘Researchers use structured interviews far more often in quantitative than in qualitative research’ (Esterberg 2002, p. 86).

Unstructured interviews are the least formal type of interview. The researcher asks questions occasionally during the interview process, and the conversation between the researcher and the interview respondent can take different directions during the interview.

Researchers frequently combine such interviews with observation by means of a field study. This type of interview makes it easier to gain greater insight into a field and how different people interact and make conversations. However, comparing different answers will often be impossible, because the interviews frequently lack an interview guide containing topics and specific questions. In addition, the interview respondents sometimes talk about totally different topics, which can make comparison of cases impossible (Esterberg 2002, p. 89).

Semi-structured interviews are more formal, rigid and structured than unstructured interviews, but less formal, rigid and structured than structured interviews. Usually, the researcher formulates an interview guide containing topics and ‘open-ended’ questions. However, the sequence of the questions and how the questions are expressed may differ for various interview respondents (Esterberg 2002).

In this dissertation, semi-structured interviews were used to gather data. In order to ensure comparability of answers, all interview respondents were asked some identical questions, thus approximating structured interviews. The questions were open-ended, and follow-up questions were asked by e-mail and telephone, both during and subsequent to the respondent interviews. Researchers should focus on asking clear questions that have been formulated in an interview guide, and should ask as many questions as possible that will later be comparable across interview respondents.

3.7 Causality, process-tracing and the congruence method

This dissertation combines the congruence method with process-tracing. The congruence method involves formulating several theoretically derived expectations and then testing these against observed data. Any theory can generate many observable expectations, which should be fulfilled if the theory is correct. If expectations and data match, a researcher can conclude

that the expected causal relation has been validated (George and Bennett 2005). Such theory testing requires clear expectations to be formulated for investigating the link between expectations and empirical findings. Moreover, in cases in which the expectations form a pattern of interdependent observations, they become more risky in terms of theory testing (Andersen 2007). Contrasting theory with multiple interdependent empirical observations is a useful strategy, and is referred to as pattern matching.

The researcher can easily combine the congruence method with the theoretical strategy of ‘contrasting’. Roness (2009, p. 46) distinguishes between several theoretical strategies, such as ‘prioritizing’, ‘complementing’, ‘contrasting’ and ‘synthesizing’. This dissertation employs a strategy based on ‘contrasting’, i.e. ‘using several theories at the same time, comparing them with each other’. Establishing a close link between theories and the selected cases should be part of any design strategy.

Different theories will often explain distinct empirical phenomena, and researchers therefore need to deal with competing explanations in a study. ‘The plausibility of an explanation is enhanced to the extent that alternative explanations are considered and found to be less consistent with the data, or less supportable by available generalizations’ (George and Bennett 2005, p. 91). Handling such alternative explanations will always be a great challenge. In this dissertation, this challenge has been met by selecting four different theoretical perspectives and formulating expectations on the basis of each one, thus allowing alternative explanations to be considered. The researcher should therefore ask relevant questions like: ‘Does the case (or cases) constitute an easy or tough test of the theory? Do case findings really support the theory in question? Do they perhaps also support other theories the investigator has overlooked or inadequately considered?’ (George and Bennett 2005, p. 106).

Further, by employing different theoretical perspectives, a researcher may easily present a decision-making process as more intellectual and rational than it actually was in practice. George and Bennett (2005, p. 98) label this pitfall: '*The risk of Over-intellectualizing the Policy Process*'. To avoid this pitfall, the researcher needs to cover as much variation in the empirical material as possible.

The congruence method can be successfully combined with process-tracing. 'The process-tracing method attempts to identify the intervening causal process – the causal chain and causal mechanism – between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable' (George and Bennett 2005, p. 206). Multiple processes may produce similar outcomes, and it may therefore be difficult to single out one explanation from among a range of plausible explanations (George and Bennett 2005, p. 207). Process-tracing should help to establish the specific causal path leading to an outcome.

Process-tracing has several strengths, such as the capacity to reveal spuriousness and identify equifinality. However, process-tracing also has weaknesses. Process-tracing requires specific theories and much data about the processes linking independent and dependent variables, and such data can be very difficult to obtain. In addition, the data may often support several causal mechanisms, which makes the search for a specific causal path difficult (George and Bennett 2005, p. 223). In this dissertation, the researcher has sought to formulate theories and to gather sufficient data so as to eliminate alternative processes. However, this is also a learning process – it takes time to know when theories have been sufficiently specified and enough data has been gathered.

3.8 Analytical generalization

Controlled comparison contributes to ‘analytical generalization’. However, controlled comparison, and thus ‘analytical generalization’, is easier in theory than in practice. ‘It is generally extremely difficult to find two cases that resemble each other in every respect but one, as controlled comparison requires’ (George and Bennett 2005, p. 152). George and Bennett (2005, p. 153) refer to the study ‘*A System of Logic*’, conducted by John Stuart Mill in 1843: ‘The (positive) method of agreement attempts to identify a similarity in the independent variable associated with a common outcome in two or more cases. The (negative) method of difference attempts to identify independent variables associated with different outcomes’ (George and Bennett 2005, p. 153).

Mill’s theory does not take ‘equifinality’ into account, meaning that different causal paths may lead to similar results. ‘Equifinality challenges and undermines the common assumption that similar outcomes in several cases must have a common cause that remains to be discovered’ (George and Bennett 2005, p. 161). Equifinality could constitute a major challenge in this dissertation, as several factors could produce the same outcome. In other words, the varied organizational structures adopted by different countries can produce the same outcome. Process-tracing is a useful strategy for dealing with the challenge of equifinality, because it leads researchers to seek out data describing the precise link or causal path between the independent and dependent variables.

The study of inter-organizational coordination of food safety issues in Norway and New Zealand involves *analytical generalization*, rather than *statistical generalization*. A researcher can sometimes compensate for the loss of statistical generalization in a case study by selecting cases and variables so as to approximate the experimental design. The researcher can then analyze the effect of these selections on the outcome by observing

changes in a specific independent variable. However, in practice, such a design is not easy to identify.

Gerring (2007, p. 43) distinguishes between internal and external validity. Internal validity measures the extent to which a causal relationship has been firmly established, whereas external validity measures the extent to which this finding can be generalized to ‘a broader – unstudied – population’. External validity is a greater challenge in case studies than internal validity, because external validity measures ‘representativeness between sample and population’ (Gerring 2007, p. 43).

In this dissertation, the inclusion of two cases enhances external validity. Comparing multiple cases, whether within or between different countries, produces more empirical observations than a single case study. Therefore, theory testing will frequently be more robust if it incorporates multiple cases, especially where these cases are selected on the basis of a consciously comparative design (George and Bennett 2005). Accordingly, studying inter-organizational coordination in both Norway and New Zealand ensures more empirical observations than if only one country was studied.

The response to the *E.coli* outbreak in Norway in 2006 is an example of inter-organizational coordination processes during a crisis. Equally, Operation Taurus and Operation Waiheke provided insights into inter-organizational crisis coordination in New Zealand. A crisis tests the capacity of a system to handle complex inter-organizational coordination processes, because in a crisis situation the administrative apparatus is subject to greater stress and environmental pressures, and has less time at its disposal, than during normal day-to-day inter-organizational coordination processes (Report 2006a). (It should be noted that more relevant information has been published on the Norwegian *E.coli* crisis than on Operation Waiheke. This has made it easier to discuss the former in detail than the latter.)

Comparative analyses require the systematic collection and categorization of data, and a discussion of the findings. In order to safeguard the comparative element, data must be sufficiently comparative, i.e. it must cover parallel categories for each individual case. Such data may be easier to gather in some cases than in others. Moreover, the demands for rich and extensive data are even higher where a causal process is to be traced. However, the follow-up interviews allowed more relevant data to be obtained for testing the expectations formulated on the basis of the theories.

By contrast to large-N statistical analysis, the case study design does not feature specific techniques for testing uncertainty, which makes analytical generalization challenging. The researcher needs to decide how representative a case or cases are in relation to the unstudied population. A primary challenge is to ensure ‘*control* of undesired variation’, in order to be better able to determine this representativeness (Andersen 1997, p. 16).

Nevertheless, Yin (1994), Andersen (1997) and Hartley (2004) argue that ‘analytical generalization’ in case studies constitutes an alternative to ‘statistical generalization’, because control can be achieved through experimental design. Selecting cases on the basis of specific criteria may ensure such control, thus approximating the experimental design. ‘In other words, generalization is about theoretical propositions not about populations’ (Hartley 2004, p. 331).

In this dissertation, the systematic analysis of data by reference to four contrasting theoretical perspectives will allow good explanations of inter-organizational coordination processes in Norway and New Zealand to be found. In addition, comparing inter-organizational coordination processes during crises in these two countries with day-to-day inter-organizational coordination processes will provide more relevant data for testing expectations. Moreover, comparing the cases of two different countries will increase the

significance of the results, and greater validity will be ensured through the use of the congruence method and process-tracing combined with active interviewing. Theories may also be refined 'either by broadening or narrowing their scope or introducing new types and subtypes through the inclusion of additional variables' (George and Bennett 2005, p. 124).

A researcher should distinguish clearly between theory development and theory testing. Researchers should therefore develop expectations from theories, gather new, empirical data and test theories against these data. Researchers should not 'develop a theory from evidence and then test it against the same evidence; facts cannot test or contradict a theory that is constructed around them' (George and Bennett 2005, p. 111).

However, researchers may amend and/or expand the scope of expectations during the research process to ensure that such expectations are clear enough to test theories, or to ensure greater validity by adopting one of two strategies (or both): a) add more interview respondents to the study after amending the expectations developed from the theories, and b) asking the same respondents follow-up questions if the first interview did not cover the relevant topic. A researcher must often conduct several interviews to gain more knowledge about the case and its context before being able to formulate expectations. This dissertation therefore employed a combination of the two strategies.

Still, knowing how a researcher should analyze the data in a case study represents a great challenge: 'when a theory fails to fit the evidence in a case, it is not obvious whether the theory fails to explain the particular case, fails to explain a whole class of cases, or does not explain any cases at all' (George and Bennett 2005, p. 115). Gerring (2007) therefore argues that case studies are better at generating hypotheses than at testing them.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed methods and design challenges. Case studies have both strengths and weaknesses. One strength is that case studies are good at dealing with complex processes, such as inter-organizational coordination processes. Understanding complex processes of this kind may therefore require case studies. Design may be a critical factor, as it is difficult to approximate the experimental design when selecting cases for study. The cases included in this dissertation (i.e. the coordination of food safety issues in Norway and New Zealand respectively), have been selected on the basis of variation in the independent variables. In addition, a comparison of day-to-day coordination and crisis coordination may generate more empirical data to compare how inter-organizational coordination works in the two countries. In addition, this dissertation has discussed how to use interviews in a study of coordination.

4 The Norwegian model – reform paths and trends

4.1 Introduction

Norway is a representative democracy with a parliamentary system based on multiple political parties. Minority governments were common until 2005, when a coalition of the Labour Party, the Socialist Left Party and the Centre Party established a majority government. What has characterized the reforms in Norway? (Christensen *et al.* 2007c). Historically, governments have adopted a pragmatic reform approach, in contrast to New Zealand. However, the rhetoric employed by left-wing and right-wing parties differs, with the left-wing parties focusing more on WG and the right-wing parties focusing more on NPM (Lie and Christensen 2007). This chapter outlines central-government reform trends in Norway, and discusses the effects of these trends by reference to the four theoretical perspectives. The findings in this chapter and the findings in the next chapter concerning reform trends and effects in New Zealand will be combined with, and compared to findings relating to inter-organizational coordination of food safety issues in Norway and New Zealand in the last chapter.

4.2 Reform trends in Norway

Norway has a long tradition of making agencies subordinate to ministries. The first agencies were established around 1850. In the 1880s, agencies became more autonomous, and the balance between political steering and agency autonomy became a core issue of debate (Christensen 2003; Christensen and Lægreid 2004). From the 1950s onwards, the numbers

of both agencies and ministries increased. The ministries were to administer political steering and strategic thinking, while the agencies were to deal with individual and professional cases and technical issues (Grønlie 1999).

Rolland (1999, pp. 200–201) discusses the development of the central administration in Norway between 1947 and 1997, and identifies six reform trends from this period. First, Rolland argues that, prior to the 1980s; there was a ‘strong increase in both the number of units and the number of changes’. It appears that both organizational design and organizational redesign were considered important tools for solving problems in society. Second, since the 1980s, the central administration has focused more on reorganization than on increasing the number of administrative units. Third, continuous reforms made it quite easy to make organizational changes within the central administration. Fourth, continuous reforms increased the ‘complexity’ of the central administration. Fifth, political and administrative leaders changed the internal organizational structures of the ministries. Sixth, the leaders implemented more reforms in some policy fields than in others.

Since the 1980s, reform paths and trends in Norway have been less revolutionary than in New Zealand. Norway has followed a path of incremental NPM adoption, and its reforms have been more sector-oriented, i.e. different reforms have been implemented in various sectors. Therefore, the context of a sector plays a significant role in determining the success of a reform in that sector. The sector-oriented structure leads to much variety in reforms across sectors. ‘Compared with Anglo-Saxon countries such as Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, the Scandinavian countries have clearly pursued less radical reform strategies, yet, even in these countries, many organizational reforms carried out since the mid-1980s have been marked by NPM’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 129).

Norway has recently implemented central-government reform programmes, but the motivation behind these has not been ideological. ‘They have been marked by pragmatism

and consensus rather than ideology, and they have focused more on increasing efficiency in public administration through restructuring than on dismantling the public sector' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 129). Since the mid-1980s, more comprehensive reform programmes containing new ideas about how to organize the central administration have been introduced, and the new ideas have become more systematic.

Two core features have been incorporated into Norway's central government, and these features are connected to the main principles of NPM. First, political and administrative leaders have implemented reforms based on the structural devolution of agencies and state-owned companies, which means a change in the 'form of affiliation' between, for example, a directorate and a ministry, or between a state-owned company and a ministry. Agencies and state-owned companies may be more independent of political leaders by virtue of structural devolution (Christensen and Lægreid 2002; Christensen *et al.* 2007a).

Second, political and administrative leaders have implemented reforms based on a steering technique called MBOR, which is 'a structural-instrumental tool for political and administrative leadership' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 130). Political and administrative leaders must be able to state measurable objectives and goals, which then form the scale against which results are measured. Such measurements may be important for the purposes of revising goals, implementing changes or allocating more resources to the policy field in question (Christensen and Lægreid 2002; Christensen *et al.* 2007a).

Since 2005, the majority government consisting of the Labour Party, the Socialist Left Party and the Centre Party has departed from the policies of the previous, minority coalition, government. 'Renewal' has replaced 'modernization' as the core principle of the central government. 'Modernization' is generally associated with NPM, whereas 'renewal' is generally associated with WG. The political leaders wanted to demonstrate distance from the principle of the past: 'modernization'. Accordingly, the current political and administrative

leaders are focusing more on inter-organizational coordination and WG rather than NPM and structural separation (Lie and Christensen 2007). How has the concept of coordination been dealt with in recent reforms? Some examples may show variety across policy fields.

The Norwegian hospital reform of 2002 contained ‘hybrid’ measures, such as implementing both centralization and decentralization, which may increase complexity. ‘The reform has two faces – one that prescribes better governmental control and one that prescribes more autonomy to the sublevels of the enterprise’ (Lægreid *et al.* 2005, p. 1034). The Ministry of Health and Care Services represents the state as owner. The reform also introduced several goals that could conflict. ‘To enhance partly conflicting goals such as performance, quality, efficiency, equity, and economy through one reform is an overwhelming task’ (Lægreid *et al.* 2005, p. 1034). An observation is that to ensure more control and autonomy at the same time may be difficult, which seems to be a general finding: ‘On the one hand, organizations attain greater autonomy through structural devolution and an increased capacity for exercising discretionary judgment in everyday tasks. On the other hand, in order for superiors to control whether or not organizations have achieved targeted goals, the latter are held accountable by being subjected to more rigid performance management systems’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 154).

One reform in Norway that raises questions about coordination is the new welfare administration: ‘a merger of the *employment* and *national insurance administrations*, combined with more formal collaboration between this new administration and the local government *social services administration*’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007b, p. 390). One goal of this merger is to ensure greater *intra*-organizational coordination, i.e. to shift the focus away from *inter*-organizational coordination. Since leaders often find intra-organizational coordination easier to achieve than inter-organizational coordination, the reform may potentially solve some important coordination issues.

Another objective is to move people from welfare schemes into ordinary employment. A further important objective of this reform is to ensure that people meet a more 'user-friendly' administration (Christensen *et al.* 2007b). 'Viewed in a historical perspective, the merger of the employment and insurance administrations in Norway is rather unique. Never before have two such large sectoral administrations been merged' (Christensen *et al.* 2007b, p. 403). Concentrating on clients makes it easier for these clients to gain access to important services. 'The assumption here is that, by paying more attention to clients, public service organizations will learn to deliver better results, and that clients will notice the change and experience increased satisfaction' (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004, p. 125).

The organization of the immigration field is also an important reform in Norway. The balance between control and autonomy is a core feature of this policy field as well, and these tensions affect coordination. The work of Christensen *et al.* (2006) and Christensen and Lægreid (2008) show that this policy field features great complexity and instability in organizational forms. Several ministries, as secretariat for political leadership, have been involved in the organization of this policy field, which is now administered by three directorates with different tasks and responsibilities.

The first of these is the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (NDI), established by political and administrative leaders in 1988. A department of the Ministry of Justice handled complaints and was responsible for professional regulation, while the Ministry of Local Government was responsible for administrative issues. A new structure introduced in 2001 has given the NDI greater autonomy, which ensures that ministers cannot intervene in individual cases, except for cases related to national security and foreign policy (Christensen *et al.* 2006). Later on, in 2005 and 2006, ministers have tried to strengthen the control of the NDI.

The second directorate, the Immigration Appeals Board (IAB), was established by political and administrative leaders in 2001. The IAB, established as an agency of the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Affairs, which was given responsibility for immigration in 2001 (Christensen *et al.* 2006). A public committee discusses the future organization of the IAB and the mandate points in the direction of more control of IAB.

A further structural change, implemented in 2005–2006, established the third directorate, the Directorate of Integration and Diversity, by splitting NDI. The immigration department in The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Affairs was also divided into two units, respectively dealing with regulation and integration. The immigration field was then moved to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (later called the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion) (Christensen *et al.* 2006).

In 2010 the government implemented several structural changes relevant for the organization of immigration (Press Release 2009). The new Ministry of Labour lost all immigration policies and they were divided between two other ministries; the regulation/control side was moved to the Ministry of Justice and Police, while the integration side was moved to the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion.

In 2003, the Norwegian government announced a white paper (White Paper No. 17 (2002/2003)) that changes would be made to the organization and geographical location of regulatory agencies in Norway. This white paper presented arguments that could challenge the chances of achieving inter-organizational coordination in Norway. The government wanted to give regulatory agencies greater autonomy in professional issues, and to ensure that ministries employ frame-steering as a primary instrument of political control. ‘Political authorities are to abstain from involvement in individual cases but at the same time to strengthen their role as general regulators through the formulation of laws and rules or by the use of other general control instruments’ (Christensen and Lægreid 2004, p. 2).

The white paper introduced four goals. First, the regulatory agencies should operate with clear objectives that did not contain conflicting elements. Second, the same objectives should not be pursued by multiple regulatory agencies. This was to make the agencies focus on the objectives. Third, the regulatory agencies were to be clearly autonomous of the ministries, to ensure a separation of political considerations and professional/technical competence. Fourth, the regulatory agencies were to have strong professional competence in regulatory matters (White Paper No. 17 (2002/2003), pp. 13–15). The white paper proposed the establishment of new agencies. However, the new food safety agency in Norway was the product of a merger between different regulatory agencies and bodies. The white paper also proposed reducing the scope for ministerial instructions, i.e. freeing regulatory agencies to handle their regulatory responsibilities (White Paper No. 17 (2002/2003)); Hommen 2003).

To increase the formal distance between regulatory agencies and superior ministries may challenge political steering. According to Jordana and Levi-Faur (2004, p. 12), ‘it challenges the idea of democratic governance by elected officials by introducing an additional layer of decision-making, which is only indirectly accountable to the electorate’

Structural devolution frequently involves state-owned companies, such as the Norwegian State Railways. Such companies ‘are separate and independent legal entities, have their own board of directors and are responsible for their own economic resources’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 131). Political and administrative leaders have introduced structural devolution as an alternative to privatization; under which political leaders lose control, as private company leaders may exert significant influence on fields of great societal value. In contrast to privatization, under structural devolution the state-owned companies are completely owned by the state. ‘The central state authorities primarily control the companies through their position of ownership’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 131). Such ownership should be exercised ‘through the general assembly’ (Zuna 2001, p. 140).

Christensen and Læg Reid (2008, p. 104) studied the degree of central-government coordination in Norway, examining data from 2006. Their survey of 1,516 civil servants from 49 central agencies and 1,846 civil servants from 18 ministries revealed various interesting features, not least that: 'The central government in Norway is characterized by strong sector ministries and relatively weak super-ministries with coordination responsibilities across ministerial areas' (Christensen and Læg Reid 2008, p. 100).

An exception to this statement is the Ministry of Finance, which in addition to sector-specific financial issues handles horizontal inter-organizational coordination across sectors. The Office of the Prime Minister also handles such inter-organizational coordination, but has fewer resources for such activities than the Ministry of Finance. Christensen and Læg Reid (2008, p. 97) conclude that 'there are more problems with horizontal coordination than with vertical coordination; that coordination problems are bigger in central agencies than in ministries; and that a low level of mutual trust tends to aggravate coordination problems'.

The introduction of neo-liberalism implies greater privatization and the increased application of market logic within central government. However, such neoliberal features have only been observed to a moderate degree in Norway, compared with other countries such as New Zealand (Mydske *et al.* 2007). For example, the present government has introduced a white paper (White Paper No. 19 (2008/2009)) on the organization of central government in Norway. It states that democratic values and community should be important features in Norway, in contrast to neo-liberalism, and that the government wants a 'strong and efficient public sector'. High degree of political steering will be important to ensure implementation of official goals and that public organizations need to work together to achieve common goals. Therefore, the government should focus on inter-organizational coordination processes. It also states that public organizations need to see beyond organizational boundaries, and argues that the users of public services play an important role

in central government. Among other things, civil servants should use appropriate and understandable language.

4.3 Effects of central-government reform in Norway

What are the effects of the reforms implemented in Norway? The instrumental-hierarchical perspective predicts that political and administrative leaders will formulate goals, which will then be transformed to desired effects. Accordingly, there is a close link between reforms and desired effects: ‘An instrumental perspective presupposes a tight connection between visions, goals, programmes, initiatives, organizational forms, implementation and effects’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 144). Still, Pierson (2000, p. 483) emphasizes that reforms may have unanticipated consequences, according to an institutional-cultural perspective.

Norwegian governments have not implemented comprehensive, multi-sector reforms like those introduced in New Zealand. Accordingly, any discussion of Norwegian reform effects must focus on individual sectors. Nevertheless, it is important to compare differences and similarities between these sectors to reveal the ‘big’ reform picture. Such differences and similarities should be linked with NPM and WG. In contrast to NPM, which focuses on specialization, WG focuses on coordination. WG takes a new coordination approach to old problems, and includes different organizations, actors and levels (Christensen and Lægreid 2007a).

The white paper on the organization of central government in Norway (White Paper No. 19 (2008/2009)), advocates WG rather than NPM, and focuses extensively on inter-organizational coordination when arguing for its position. The institutional-myth perspective asserts that governments will promote ideas that are popular in the environment, because more and more countries are concentrating on WG rather than NPM. Reforms have resulted

in fragmentation in many countries, and these countries are now focusing on WG to solve their fragmentation problems. However, WG often include several strategies, and measuring their effects may be difficult. The white paper also describes the users as important. Given that this is a main feature of the NPM perspective, it is clear that the white paper actually proposes a complex hybrid of NPM and WG. However, the white paper directs much more attention to WG than NPM.

In 2006, several researchers ‘conducted a large survey of all civil servants with at least 1 year of tenure from executive officers to top civil servants in Norwegian ministries and a representative sample of every third civil servant in the central agencies, covering evenly all sectors and types of administrations’ (Christensen and Lægreid 2008, p. 104). Christensen and Lægreid argue, on the basis of this survey, that coordination is an important feature of Norway’s central administration. Even though it is important to ensure inter-organizational coordination, this is never easy in practice since Norway has ‘strong sector ministries and relatively weak super-ministries with coordination responsibilities across ministerial areas’ (Christensen and Lægreid 2008, p. 100).

In particular, civil servants frequently describe horizontal coordination as more challenging than vertical coordination. Leaders find it easier to exercise vertical control than horizontal control. However, the fact that issues frequently straddle several policy fields means that civil servants are put under pressure to pursue horizontal inter-organizational coordination. Still, such coordination is not easy to achieve. ‘Although the formal organizational structure does not necessarily indicate anything about actual behaviour of members in an organization, it will constrain how tasks are carried out’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 27).

Generally, according to an institutional-myth perspective, various governments have employed rhetoric to distance themselves from previous governments of different political

shades. Expressing such distance is an important way of symbolizing that reforms will make a significant difference and improvement, and that other governments have presented unsound and old solutions. The majority government that came into power in 2005 made it clear that NPM represented an old and unsound solution to current problems. Much specialization, as under NPM, caused great inter-organizational fragmentation, rather than more inter-organizational coordination. The majority government therefore wanted to indicate a new path, based on WG (Lie and Christensen 2007; Mydske *et al.* 2007).

Norway's welfare reform combines NPM and WG features. On the one hand, the reform is consistent with the WG perspective, because the new welfare administration focuses on coordination. 'The reform can be seen as a "whole-of-government" initiative intended to increase the capacity of government to address "wicked problems" cutting across existing policy areas and to improve vertical and horizontal coordination in the fields of policy and implementation' (Christensen *et al.* 2007b, p. 390).

On the other hand, the reform has NPM features, as it focuses on the clients and users, a central feature of NPM reform in several countries. Both the NPM perspective and the WG perspective are relatively broad, encompassing several reform elements. It is therefore clear that when reforms involve a merger as complex as in the Norwegian case, the reform elements will often be complex too. To balance different reform elements as well as values will always be difficult, as Gregory (2001, p. 256) describes: 'The moment never arrives when conflicting and diverse values like efficiency, effectiveness, equity, responsiveness, due process, fairness, creativity and the like are ever reconciled in some optimal achievement of reformist design'.

According to an instrumental-hierarchical perspective, Norway's new welfare administration is complex for several reasons. First, the new structure involves coordination between the municipalities and the state. Such external inter-organizational coordination can

be very challenging, because two different political-administrative systems need to be coordinated (Christensen and Læg Reid 2008). Second, two state administrations were merged into one unit. 'Never before have central and local government cooperated in this way in the form of a one-stop shop system at one geographical level' (Christensen *et al.* 2007b, p. 403).

On the one hand, a merger can be a good way of avoiding fragmentation problems, as intra-organizational coordination is less challenging than inter-organizational coordination. In addition, users with complex issues and demands often get more and better help if they can relate to a single organization, rather than having to move from organization to organization to satisfy complex demands. On the other hand, merging several organizations presents administrative leaders with challenges, as they are required to focus on very complex problems. 'The current reform is even more complicated because it also involves social services based locally' (Christensen *et al.* 2007b, p. 403). Askim *et al.* (2010, p. 244) argues that it is not possible at this stage of the process to assess stable effects: 'It is too early to conclude with any certainty whether the reform under study, the NAV reform, has fulfilled its main goals. Preliminary findings suggest, however, that the reform is better suited to getting more people into the workforce and to increasing service-orientation than it is to increasing efficiency in the welfare apparatus'.

The institutional-cultural perspective suggests that a merger will frequently encounter cultural resistance. 'Institutional factors, as expressed through cultural traditions, established rules and socially defined conventions, put restraints on the decisions made within public organizations' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 10). Mergers may meet cultural resistance because cultural features such as traditions, routines and interaction patterns are challenged. 'From a cultural perspective, reform happens slowly and in increments. It is evolution rather than revolution, a process where traditional norms and values are balanced against new ones,

through a process of adaption to internal and external pressure' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 127).

To ensure success, according to an institutional-cultural perspective, reforms should be compatible with the cultural norms and values of the organization in question. Incompatibility can cause various problems for political and administrative leaders, as well as for the users of public services. Leaders may 'give up reforms because they recognize that the internal, cultural resistance is too strong'. An alternative will be to implement strategies to cope with 'cultural resistance' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 169).

One such strategy may be to instil shared cultural values in the organization members. The reform of the employment and welfare administrations emphasized the importance of such culture-building (Christensen *et al.* 2007b). Further, the food safety agency in Norway has focused on building an organizational culture. Culture-building is more compatible with WG principles than NPM principles. The institutional-cultural perspective suggests that NPM does not direct any effort at cultural issues, focusing more on structural ones. The WG perspective, by contrast, focuses more on cultural issues than on structural issues. In order to build cultural features, political and administrative leaders require an understanding of how cultural features grow and develop. Leaders also find it difficult to use cultural features instrumentally (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 167).

Why is implementing reforms difficult? 'Gaining adequate insight can be difficult because structural changes are much easier to grasp and understand than culture, which is harder to articulate and relate to structure' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 167). Nevertheless, building an organizational culture has been popular in recent years in several organizations (Jamil 2005). The institutional-cultural perspective states that strong cultural values increase the chances of achieving desired effects. By focusing on cultural issues, leaders signal that

civil servants are important, and that the involvement of civil servants can contribute to the achievement of desired effects.

How do reforms affect the balance between political control and agency autonomy? Christensen and Lægreid (2001b) argue that, from an instrumental-hierarchical perspective, structural devolution involves a reduction in political steering. First, devolution increases the barriers to intervention. Second, fewer instruments are available for influence. Third, structural devolution increases the demand for inter-organizational coordination because it will be easier to influence actions within an organization than between organizations. The latter is more difficult to accomplish, as organizational boundaries have to be crossed. Fourth, the institutional-cultural perspective suggests that politicians find it more difficult to intervene and more appropriate to be passive.

However, political steering may increase under structural devolution (Christensen and Lægreid 2002). First, politicians may focus more on important strategic considerations. Such considerations may be very important because they determine the direction of development in the field in question. Second, strategic considerations require time and energy, and many individual cases may be costly in this regard. Therefore, the balance between political control and agency autonomy seems to be a great and continual challenge. Structural changes, such as more devolution, present political leaders with dilemmas. They want to achieve the desired effects, but at the same time do not want to be associated with unpopular actions and decisions, according to an institutional-myth perspective. On the one hand, politicians want political control over individual cases. On the other hand, involvement in individual cases may cause problems for politicians, as they may be blamed for unpopular actions and decisions.

Christensen *et al.* (2006) highlight the unstable features of the immigration field, in which several reforms have been implemented over a short period, and in which various

ministries have been involved in policy-making. The immigration field has some similarities with the food safety field, in that both may fall under multiple policy ‘umbrellas’ for several fields at the same time. In instrumental terms, political and administrative leaders use reforms as tools to affect concrete actions.

However, under the institutional-cultural perspective, neither immigration nor food safety is ‘naturally’ limited to one policy field. Rather, both food safety and immigration are linked to several policy fields, and leaders must decide where such issues should lie. Norway’s immigration reform includes elements of both NPM and WG. On the one hand, establishing several directorates is consistent with the NPM approach of creating single-purpose organizations, a popular recipe in New Zealand in the 1980s. According to the instrumental-hierarchical perspective, combining vertical and horizontal inter-organizational specialization makes it difficult to ensure inter-organizational coordination. On the other hand, Norway’s immigration reform touches on several policy fields, and the involvement of political leaders in multiple policy fields is a common feature of WG.

Continual reforms in the immigration field may be the result of ‘weak’ organizational thinking (Christensen *et al.* 2006, p. 162). According to the instrumental-hierarchical perspective, reforms require clear organizational thinking in order to produce the desired effects. Accordingly, political and administrative leaders need to define goals, consider different structural alternatives, and examine what effects these alternatives may have on goal achievement. Clear organizational thinking frequently requires ‘full instrumental rationality’, although such rationality may be a fiction more than a reality. In practice, ‘bounded rationality’³ seems to be a more realistic concept than ‘full instrumental rationality’. ‘*Bounded rationality*’ implies that an organization’s goals are diffuse, inconsistent or unstable’ and organizations need to handle complex challenges (Christensen

³ See for example Simon (1965).

et al. 2007a, p. 23). Christensen *et al.* (2006) conclude that organizational thinking has been ‘weak’ in the immigration field, and such ‘weak’ organizational thinking can be linked to the ‘bounded’ variant of rationality. However, decision-makers may to some degree define goals, consider different structural alternatives, and examine what effects these alternatives may have on goal achievement, even though such decision-makers operate under ‘bounded rationality’.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that, compared to countries like New Zealand, Norway has been reluctant to introduce radical reforms across the whole state sector. However, Norway has introduced reforms focused on management by objectives and results as well as structural devolution. Such elements are central aspects of NPM in Norway. Since 2005, Norway has focused on WG to ensure greater coordination and integration. The government that came to power in 2005 stated that NPM could cause problems such as fragmentation and lack of coordination. However, although the present government talks more about WG than NPM, Norway still focuses on NPM and particularly on management by objectives and results.

5 The New Zealand model – reform paths and trends

5.1 Introduction

New Zealand is a small country located in the South Pacific Ocean. It is a sovereign state with a democratic parliamentary government based on the Westminster system. New Zealand implemented several reforms in the 1980s. These reforms have received much attention from public managers and researchers, because they were so comprehensive and based on neoliberalism⁴.

Boston and Eichbaum (2005) focus on two different phases of reform in New Zealand: 1984–1999 and post-1999. Therefore, two sets of questions may be asked: 1) what has characterized the first reform phase (1984–1999), and what have been the effects of the reforms that were implemented? 2) What has characterized the second reform phase (1999 and beyond), and what have been the effects of the reforms that were implemented? (Christensen *et al.* 2007c).

5.2 Phase 1: New Public Management (NPM)

In 1984, due to economic problems, New Zealand embarked on a path of radical reform. The reforms of the mid-1980s involved new legislation, in particular the State-Owned Enterprises Act 1986, the State Sector Act 1988, and the Public Finance Act 1989 (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004, p. 280). Researchers, politicians and administrators have paid much attention to the

⁴ For a discussion of neoliberalism see Mydske *et al.* (2007).

reforms implemented in New Zealand in the 1980s (see Norman 2003; Gregory 2003; Gregory 2006; Christensen and Lægreid 2007b; Chapman and Duncan 2007).

The New Zealand reforms embraced several principles of NPM, including the combination of vertical and horizontal specialization, privatization, structural devolution, single-purpose organizations, formal contracting, and separation of policy-making from service delivery (Boston *et al.* 1996; Christensen and Lægreid 2001a). This model, commonly known as the New Zealand model, challenged traditional ways of organizing the state sector, which stated that conflicting goals should be eliminated, and such conflicting goals should not be pursued by the same organization or organizational unit. Rather, goals that conflicted should be dealt with by separate organizations or separate organizational units. Under NPM, the preferred organizational model involved units having one task or responsibility, rather than many (Christensen and Lægreid 2001a).

At the end of the 1990s, New Zealand had 2,850 Crown entities (Boston and Eichbaum 2005). Depending on their function, their relationship with the government may be close or more distant (Gill 2002). Crown entities take responsibility for major functions in New Zealand. 'In contrast to departments, which are directly responsible to Ministers, Crown entities are owned by the Crown but are legally separate' (Schick 1996, p. 37). A board functions as a mediator between the minister and the chief executives of the Crown Entities. Such Crown Entities 'are a catch-all category for the many institutions that are neither departments nor State-owned enterprises'. Crown entities differ considerably, which implies that many Crown entities were created at arm's length from the relevant ministries (Schick 1996, p. 37).

The Treasury states that five principles underpin the New Zealand model implemented in the mid-1980s (Treasury 1987, p. 55): 'clarity of objectives', 'freedom to manage', 'accountability', 'effective assessment of performance', and 'adequate information

flows'. However, these principles lack consistency, indicating both autonomy and control at the same time (Christensen and Lægreid 2001a).

Clarity of objectives

Clarity of objectives is a central component of the New Zealand model. 'The initial element of a management process must be as clear a specification as possible of the objectives which managers are responsible for achieving' (Treasury 1987, p. 55). Clarity of objectives ensures measurement and control of the actual performance of the managers involved. The clarity of such objectives varies from policy field to policy field. For example, such clarity may differ between food safety and immigration. 'This implies both a clear identification of individual objectives – objective performance targets in areas where that [are] possible, for example – and the avoidance of multiple, conflicting objectives' (Treasury 1987, p. 55).

Freedom to manage

'Managerial reform is grounded on a simple principle: managers cannot be held responsible for results unless they have freedom to act...' (Schick 1996, p. 15). Freedom to manage means that managers are free to select the inputs that will produce the best possible outputs. The introduction of NPM-inspired ideas shifted the focus from inputs to outputs (Cook 2004, p. 4).

Accountability

According to Schick (1996), accountability is an important feature of the New Zealand model. The model states that managers must have freedom both to act and to decide what kind of inputs to use to secure the best possible results. Following the introduction of NPM, performance and achievement of objectives rather than rules and procedures, became the

basis for accountability (Norman 2003; Cook 2004). Another two elements will also be important: ‘incentives and sanctions’ in organizational behaviour. ‘Incentives and sanctions must be in place to modify the behaviour of managers to ensure that they *do act* to meet established objectives rather than pursuing independent goals of their own’ (Treasury 1987, pp. 55–56).

Effective assessment of performance

It is important to evaluate and assess performance to establish whether pre-determined objectives have been achieved or not (Cook 2004). ‘If managers are to be accountable for their performance, those to whom they are accountable must have the means to establish the quality of that performance’ (Treasury 1987, p. 56). Performance assessment is important to ensure improvement and to enable the formulation of performance improvement strategies. However, performance is frequently difficult to measure, as it has both qualitative and quantitative elements.

Adequate information flows

A further important feature of the New Zealand model is achieving ‘adequate information flows’. A ‘sufficient quantity and quality of information concerning performance will be required’ (Treasury 1987, p. 56). Effective performance assessment requires adequate information flows.

Effects of the first phase of state-sector reforms

The instrumental-hierarchical perspective states that leaders formulate goals and implement reform to achieve such goals. ‘A hierarchically based instrumental perspective would expect there to be a close connection between reform and change’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p.

123). The state-sector reforms implemented in the mid-1980s resulted in comprehensive changes involving much vertical and horizontal specialization. These changes were the result of planned and conscious design by the political-administrative leadership, according to an instrumental-hierarchical perspective. What were the effects of such comprehensive reforms?

Schick showed that comprehensive reforms had contributed to instrumental effects. 'Both within government and among outside observers interviewed for this study, there is overwhelming consensus on the superiority of the reformed system and hardly any sentiment for dismantling the new arrangements and going back to centralised control' (Schick 1996, p. 4). Schick concluded that the reforms contributed to more efficiency. 'Change is ongoing, there is continuing pressure to drive costs down and efficiency up, managers routinely monitor results against plans, and they are more responsive to external conditions and customer interests' (Schick 1996, pp. 6–7). His impression was that there was 'near universal agreement' that the reforms brought positive effects (Schick 1996, p. 7). By presenting evidence of the link between reforms and effects, Schick validated the instrumental-hierarchical perspective, confirming that it can explain several empirical findings.

Further, Schick discussed whether New Zealand should reverse the reforms implemented after mid-1984. His answer was 'No' (Schick 1996, p. 86). He stated that the reforms implemented in the 1980s had some shortcomings, but these did not change the main conclusion that the reforms had positive effects. Schick (1996, p. 86) argued that the shortcomings could be addressed by small changes rather than by introducing new reforms. Moreover, Schick (1996, p. 42) argued that the purchase factor pushed politicians to focus more on outputs than on outcomes. The administrative leader of a department, the Chief Executive takes responsibility for outputs. By contrast, the Minister takes responsibility for outcomes. What is the difference?

Outcomes are broader in scope than outputs, and will be an important part of the ownership role. Such outcomes frequently require both intra-organizational coordination as well as inter-organizational coordination. There is a tension between the purchaser role and the owner role. The purchaser role implies a certain distance between the minister and the department. 'The purchase and ownership roles pull the Responsible Minister in opposite directions. As purchaser, the Minister should be at arms' length from the department; as owner, the Minister must take a proprietary interest in the department' (Schick 1996, p. 43). The ownership role therefore brings the department and the minister closer together. The ownership role implies that the ministers are 'institution builders', to employ a term from the institutional-cultural perspective (Schick 1996, p. 43). 'Ministers do not want to be purchasers of outputs; they want to be builders of society' (Schick 2001, p. 11).

Although the focus on outcomes may ensure greater inter-organizational coordination, 'shifting the New Zealand public management model towards an outcomes focus could potentially lead to significant changes that may not be consistent with the principles upon which the system was originally designed' (Cook 2004, p. 10). This difference in focus has impeded a close relationship between ministers and chief executives (Schick 1996). In instrumental terms, this indicates a diffuse and unclear balance between the two roles. Still, in practice, it can be difficult to ensure a clear balance between them. Nevertheless, Schick did not see a need for any new reforms of the New Zealand government, arguing instead for incremental changes, in accordance with the institutional-cultural perspective.

Two years later, in 1998, Schick presented some new arguments; he criticized the use of formal contracts in the New Zealand model (Schick 1998, p. 125). Such formal contracts increase the focus on outputs, but reduced the focus on outcomes. Further, it reduces the focus on traditional values (Schick 1998, p. 126). The tone of Schick's 1998 analysis was

somewhat more critical than that of his 1996 analysis, illustrating some of the potential negative effects of the reforms implemented in the mid-1980s. According to an institutional-cultural perspective, reforms may not always produce desired effects. Rather, they may also produce undesired effects (Pierson 2000).

Schick also adopted a more critical tone in his 2001 analysis than in his 1996 analysis (Schick 2001). Revising his assessment, he argued that he had not grasped ‘the whole picture’ in 1996 (Schick 2001, p. 2). One aspect that concerned him was that so few countries had selected similar reforms as implemented in the state sector in New Zealand in the 1980s. According to an institutional-myth perspective, institutional environments will affect how organizations implement new reforms. From this perspective, the result may be more isomorphism (Meyer and Rowan 1977; DiMaggio and Powel 1983). In contrast to this perspective, few countries seem to implement such radical reforms as New Zealand.

Schick concluded that the radical reforms had resulted in a lack of focus on strategic capacity. In addition, ‘managers had a narrow view of their work, transaction costs were high, and most contracts lacked means of enforcement’, evidenced by a lack of instrumental effects (Schick 2001, p. 2). Schick also argued that he was ‘uncertain about the course that New Zealand should take in adjusting its model to the experiences of the past decade’ (Schick 2001, p. 3). In 2001 Schick’s criticism centred on the rather loose link between reforms and effects, according to an institutional-cultural perspective.

Boston *et al.* (1996) argued that it was difficult to evaluate the actual effects of New Zealand’s reforms and structural changes, because these had been so comprehensive. An evaluation requires clear objectives. Accordingly, the evaluation of the reforms in New Zealand is rather easier in theory than in practice. However, Boston *et al.* (1996) argued that some costs and benefits could be traced to the radical reforms implemented from 1984

onwards. Two of the main benefits they identified were greater efficiency and a clearer focus.

From the instrumental-hierarchical perspective, these benefits would seem to indicate a strong relationship between reform and effects. However, New Zealand's reforms have entailed some disadvantages implying that the connection between reform and effects is not as strong as might be supposed. The creation of several small organizations and departments has led to problems of inter-organizational fragmentation and a lack of horizontal inter-organizational coordination. In addition, the New Zealand model has been criticized for focusing too much on 'capture' problems and contracts (Boston *et al.* 1996).

In 2001, a ministerial advisory group published a report on the New Zealand state sector entitled 'Review of the Centre'. The report concluded that the New Zealand model introduced in the 1980s was a good model, but still argued that the model needed some changes (Review of the Centre 2001, p. 4).

The report identified important strengths, implying that some instrumental effects have been achieved following the reforms of the mid-1980s. These strengths include: financial transparency, better services to citizens, less corruption, freedom to manage, more flexibility, improvements in efficiency and productivity, better availability of information, and more focus on accountability (Review of the Centre 2001, p. 13–14).

However, the New Zealand model also has several weaknesses (Review of the Centre 2001, pp. 4–5). These weaknesses imply a loose link between reform and effects, according to an institutional-cultural perspective. The report identified three main issues in this respect. *The first issue* was achieving better 'integrated service delivery'. *The second issue* was 'tackling fragmentation'. *The third issue* was enhancing cultural aspects of the public sector (Review of the Centre 2001, pp. 4–5).

A major challenge from the institutional-cultural perspective is establishing a culture focused on inter-organizational coordination. From the instrumental-hierarchical perspective, a lack of horizontal inter-organizational coordination is the result of a combination of multiple small agencies and a lack of inter-organizational linkages between such agencies. The result of the first wave of reform was many smaller agencies with a restricted focus ‘Fragmentation means Ministers need to build relationships with multiple agencies, and at times reconcile conflicting agency positions at an excessively detailed level’ (Review of the Centre 2001, p. 4). Such weaknesses may be regarded as unexpected consequences, according to Peters (2000, p. 483).

In 2000–2001, Norman (2003) conducted many interviews in the New Zealand state sector to gain a better understanding of how the New Zealand model worked in practice. One finding was that the implementation of the New Zealand model resulted in more ‘distance between politicians and public servants’. From the institutional-cultural perspective, this relationship had become more formalized, and was now based on contracts and formal reporting. Such contracts and formal reporting did not always work as intended. Moreover, the need for trust was underestimated in the New Zealand model (Norman 2003, chapter 8).

However, Boston and Eichbaum (2005, p. 8), while aware of the costs, such as inter-organizational fragmentation and a lack of inter-organizational coordination, state that it is reasonable to believe ‘that the new model of public management was superior to the one it replaced, and that New Zealand has enjoyed net gains from the enormous reforming efforts of the past 20 years’.

5.3 Phase 2: Whole-of-Government (WG)

WG is more of a popular ‘buzzword’ than a clear analytical theory, as it encompasses multiple features. WG focuses on both vertical and horizontal inter-organizational coordination (Bakvis and Juillet 2004; Christensen and Lægreid 2007a). The existence of such multiple features makes it difficult to evaluate the concept.

New Zealand entered a second reform phase in the late 1990s (Boston and Eichbaum 2005; Gregory 2006; Chapman and Duncan 2007). However, ‘it would be incorrect to regard 1999 as a firm point of demarcation between two discrete phases of reform’ (Boston and Eichbaum 2005, p. 20). Rather, the transition to a second reform phase has been an incremental process. What characterizes this new reform phase? What are the differences and similarities between it and the first reform phase? How is inter-organizational fragmentation tackled?

The current New Zealand model is ‘qualitatively different’ from the model implemented in the mid-1980s. ‘[C]onsolidation, development and renewal’ are core features of the second reform phase (Boston and Eichbaum 2005, p. 2). In 2000, New Zealand created a Standards Board to provide advice on how to solve problems connected to the first reform phase. The Review of the Centre (2001, p. 4) concluded that ‘the public management system as it stands today provides a reasonable platform to work from, but some significant shifts in emphasis are needed to better respond to the needs of the future’.

WG encompasses different organizations, actors and levels. Its objective is to achieve greater inter-organizational coordination, both vertically and horizontally, by bringing different positions and actors together in inter-organizational coordination processes (Christensen and Lægreid 2007a). However, in practice, WG is more concerned with horizontal and inter-organizational coordination than with vertical and intra-organizational coordination. WG may also be connected to the concept of ‘*layering*’. Under layering

existing structural features remain in place as new institutional features are added to the existing structures. In most cases, WG does not involve comprehensive structural changes – it is more about incremental changes than reforms (Thelen 2003). Examples include the introduction of groups in addition to existing patterns of interaction and communication.

The State-Owned Enterprises Act 1986, the State Sector Act 1988, and the Public Finance Act 1989 are still the three basic legislative components of the New Zealand state sector. However, some changes have been introduced. ‘The new legislative package comprises four separate enactments, three of which amend the foundational legislation while the other is a new statutory entity now constituting the fourth central component of the state sector legislative framework’ (Gregory 2006, p. 139).

Managerial autonomy may challenge political steering and democratic control, because ‘with greater freedom to manage comes the need for greater management of accountability processes and performance monitoring at the centre of government’ (Schick 1996, p. 33). Therefore, central agencies play a significant role in safeguarding the ‘collective interest’. The central agencies in New Zealand are the Treasury, the State Services Commission and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. These three agencies have a broad responsibility for inter-organizational coordination of performance.

The first generation of reforms reduced the role of the State Services Commission, an important central agency. Prior to the reforms, the State Services Commission had administered standards across various agencies (Gregory 2006, p. 139). During the first reform phase, this responsibility was given to the individual agencies. During the second reform phase, the State Services Commission was given more power to ensure inter-organizational integration and standards crossing organizational boundaries (Gregory 2006, pp. 139–140).

WG may also be associated with legislative and structural changes, even though incremental and small changes are more usual (Christensen and Lægreid 2007a). A need for greater standardization was identified in respect of the Crown entities (see discussion above). Accordingly, the Crown entities were divided into five classes by the new Act ('Crown Agents', 'Autonomous Crown Entities', 'Independent Crown Entities', 'Crown Entity Companies', and 'School Boards of Trustees' (Gregory 2006, p. 141). 'The Act standardizes the governance requirements for each class of agency, and gives the government the power to direct the agencies collectively to comply with "whole of government" requirements or those aimed at improving public services' (Gregory 2006, pp. 141–142). In addition, greater emphasis has been given to the 'reporting and accountability requirements of crown entities, with a strong emphasis on the production of annual "statements of intent", which specify, inter alia, the entity's functions and operations, and the impacts, outcomes and objectives that it seeks to achieve' (Gregory 2006, p. 142).

The second phase of reform has concentrated on 'managing for outcomes' and 'managing for shared outcomes'. The title of a paper published by the State Services Commission, 'Getting Better at Managing for Shared Outcomes', indicates the government's need to focus on such outcomes, and that progress needs to be made. 'This means delivering better results for New Zealanders will require government agencies to work together in many instances' (State Services Commission 2004, p. 3). Managing for shared outcomes is closely connected to WG, because achieving outcomes frequently requires inter-organizational coordination between several state-sector organizations. Such outcomes may be impossible to specify in a contract because many different factors influence an outcome.

In phase two, the state sector has focused less on contracts. The first reform phase created formalized relationships and promoted the use of contracts to ensure accountability. However, specifying outcomes in a contract is not easy.

5.4 Effects of the second phase of state-sector reforms

Tasks, responsibilities and issues that cross organizational boundaries require inter-organizational coordination to avoid inter-organizational fragmentation (Review of the Centre 2001; Egeberg 2003). The instrumental-hierarchical perspective suggests that WG efforts could potentially overcome inter-organizational fragmentation (Christensen and Lægreid 2007a). The Review of the Centre (2001) addressed the inter-organizational fragmentation problems of the mid-1980s. It stated that the state sector in New Zealand needed to ensure more horizontal inter-organizational coordination. The title 'Getting Better at Managing for Shared Outcomes' also indicates that New Zealand needs to focus on such coordination issues to ensure outcomes crossing organizational boundaries (State Services Commission 2004).

The instrumental-hierarchical perspective suggests that the two main benefits of smaller organizations and clear organizational boundaries are a sharper focus, and a reduction in the potential for conflicting functions (Review of the Centre 2001). However, the consequence of multiple agencies and a lack of inter-organizational coordination is increased inter-organizational fragmentation. Such inter-organizational fragmentation is a great challenge, because various policy goals require organizations to work together. Can the most recent changes in New Zealand ensure inter-organizational coordination?

The Review of the Centre (2001, p. 26) argued for using networks and teams to create inter-organizational coordination. What are the advantages and disadvantages of inter-organizational coordination? On the one hand, an increased focus on inter-organizational coordination will benefit the various issues that require such coordination. Therefore, inter-organizational coordination may contribute to the resolution of a greater number of problems, because it ensures that the problems are considered together. On the other hand, inter-organizational coordination is difficult to manage. Moreover, it is frequently more

difficult to ensure than intra-organizational coordination, as the latter occurs within a hierarchy. Finally, geographical distance between units plays a significant role in inter-organizational coordination (Egeberg 2003).

From the institutional-cultural perspective, the second reform phase focuses more on evolution than revolution. Incremental steps are characteristic features of cultural processes. Still, from an instrumental-hierarchical perspective, such incremental steps may be the result of conscious design by political and administrative leaders (Christensen *et al.* 2007a). Boston and Eichbaum (2005, p. 2) also suggest that the state sector today is 'qualitatively different' from the situation in the mid-1980s. They claim that the modern period is characterized by 'consolidation, development and renewal'.

Schick (1996) observed that the focus on contracts resulted in a 'checklist mentality'. A consequence of this was that contractual relationships had a "'silo" effect on the culture' (Cook 2004, p. 8). Now, political and administrative leaders focus more on cultural features. The Review of the Centre (2001, p. 5) emphasized 'a culture shift' and building a culture crossing organizational boundaries.

The institutional-cultural perspective states that the focus should be less on contracts and more on cultural features. Moreover, civil servants should focus more on inter-organizational activities to ensure coordination (Boston and Eichbaum 2005, pp. 32–33). From the instrumental-hierarchical perspective, the analysis of Boston and Eichbaum indicates that the latest, more incremental, steps toward WG have actually contributed to greater inter-organizational coordination, and that such coordination was an underestimated component of the first reform phase. The institutional-cultural perspective suggests that the latest steps have created a more coherent and integrated model, matching the WG perspective. It is therefore clear that combining instrumental and institutional features may

ensure greater inter-organizational coordination (*'complementing'*: using several theories at the same time, considering them as a whole') (Roness 2009, p. 46)

Gregory (2001; 2006) states that trust is more important than contracts, because actors have to trust each other in order to succeed in day-to-day activities. Especially, inter-organizational processes will always require such trust, because these processes demand more leadership (requires trust) than steering (requires contract). Based on insights from the institutional-cultural perspective, informal features and qualitative dimensions were underestimated in the NPM reforms implemented in the 1980s. Trust is therefore an important feature regardless of the degree of formalization. Inter-organizational coordination requires a sense of responsibility that goes beyond the boundaries of one's own organization. Still, to formally establish such a sense of responsibility is not easy.

According to Schick (1996), the lack of a sense of responsibility has been a problem since the introduction of NPM reforms in New Zealand in the 1980s. 'In other countries, certain actions and outcomes fall between the cracks of the accountability system because managers are unsure of what they are responsible for; in New Zealand, they sometimes fall between the cracks because managers know precisely what they are responsible for' (Schick 1996, p. 73). This observation shows how important it is to take cultural issues into account when implementing reforms.

'The latest changes will at best paper over major structural fissures' (Gregory 2006, p. 150). Gregory therefore argues that the latest changes will not achieve desired goals. He concludes that it is 'difficult to adequately fulfil the aspirations that lie behind the new legislation so long as the main architectural components of the first generation New Zealand reforms remain in place' (Gregory 2006, p. 138).

Norman (2003, p. 148) concentrates on some of the same issues. One of the main findings in his study is that the radical reforms of the mid-1980s created a formalized

distance. Nevertheless, according to Norman, the reforms have brought some benefits. The New Zealand model resulted in more '[f]reedom to manage and fiscal control' (Norman 2003, p. 195). In other words, the reforms had some instrumental effects.

Chapman and Duncan (2007) ask whether the most recent changes may be interpreted as a move towards a model that is different from the 'New Zealand model' implemented in the mid-1980s. Chapman and Duncan state that although political and administrative leaders have made various changes, the main principles of the New Zealand model remain in place. However, they conclude that the most recent changes are more evolutionary oriented than the radical changes implemented in the mid-1980s, according to an institutional-cultural perspective. 'If it is still reasonable to talk today of a distinct 'New Zealand model' of public management, then it is surely one that has moved on from the approach adopted in the late 1980s to the mid-1990s' (Chapman and Duncan 2007, p. 22).

WG should also be considered from the institutional-myth perspective when political and administrative leaders address flaws in the system. Political leaders may signal to the environment that WG represents a solution to great fragmentation problems. However, the WG perspective may also have instrumental features: 'The perspective is based on the assumption that political and administrative leaders use WG as an instrument to get government organizations to work better together' (Christensen and Lægreid 2007a, p. 1061).

The changes made during the second reform phase are characterized by 'evolution' rather than 'revolution' (Boston and Eichbaum 2005). This is consistent with the institutional-cultural perspective, which states that incremental steps are more important than reforms. However, some reforms have been implemented during the second reform phase. A major reform was the establishment of the Ministry of Social Development through a structural merger of the Ministry of Social Policy and the Department of Work and Income

in 2001. A major challenge was that the two organizations differed greatly in size. Another was that they were based in quite different geographical locations. Whereas the Ministry of Social Policy had around 180 staff and was based in the capital, Wellington, the Department of Work and Income had 5,000 staff and was spread across 143 offices all over the country (Strang *et al.* 2004, p. 2).

The two organizations also had very different cultures, a difference arising primarily from their differing roles: while the one organization had a ‘policy’ role (‘wants the best’), the other had an ‘operations’ role (‘that is workable’) The chief executive of the new Ministry of Social Development, Peter Hughes, wanted to establish ‘multi-disciplinary teams’ to secure both coordination and the involvement of the different groups brought together by the new organization. Even though such inter-organizational coordination requires resources, bringing together the people from the two sides was deemed necessary (Strang *et al.* 2004, p. 14). The instrumental-hierarchical perspective predicts that this merger will bring about greater coordination, simply because intra-organizational coordination is frequently easier to achieve than inter-organizational coordination (Egeberg 2003).

5.5 Conclusion

New Zealand implemented reforms in the 1980s that focused strongly on privatization and core elements of NPM, such as structural devolution, disaggregation and the establishment of single-purpose organizations. These structural changes were implemented to ensure greater cost efficiency and a better accountability framework. However, these changes resulted in increased fragmentation across organizations. Therefore, since 2000, New Zealand has focused more on WG, across all policy fields. The practical consequences of

this have included the introduction of inter-organizational networks and mergers intended to ensure greater coordination of services.

6 The case of Norway: key findings and discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the following research questions: First, how has the Norwegian food safety reform implemented in 2004 affected the formal and actual horizontal inter-organizational structure and culture, and the inter-organizational coordination processes between the MAF, the MFCA and the MHCS? Second, do these ministries have an integrated coordination framework, or do they operate independently? Third, how has the Norwegian food safety reform affected the vertical inter-organizational coordination structure and culture, and then the coordination processes between these three ministries and the NFSA? Fourth, what are the outcomes on coordination of these horizontal and vertical inter-organizational coordination processes? Fifth, how can the four theoretical perspectives explain the empirical findings?

6.2 Food safety reform in 2004 – structural solutions and effects

The problem of insufficient inter-organizational coordination takes different forms in different policy sectors, at different times, and in different countries. Since food safety issues frequently straddle multiple policy fields in several countries, fragmentation will often be a great challenge. Political and administrative leaders seek to meet this challenge by implementing reforms aimed at increasing inter-organizational coordination and reducing inter-organizational fragmentation (Taylor and Millar 2004; Ansell and Vogel 2006; Borraz *et al.* 2006; Rothstein 2006; Steiner 2006).

Food safety crises in several countries, for example the UK, have forced political and administrative leaders to introduce reforms to ensure greater inter-organizational coordination (Ansell and Vogel 2006). Crises frequently trigger reforms, because they test the capacity of structures to handle challenges. However, political and administrative leaders occasionally implement reforms to reduce the risk of a crisis arising, or to increase problem-handling capacity. Norway and New Zealand provide examples of the latter aim. This dissertation, however, focuses on effects, rather than on reasons for reforms.

In 2004, political and administrative leaders implemented a programme of food safety reform in Norway.

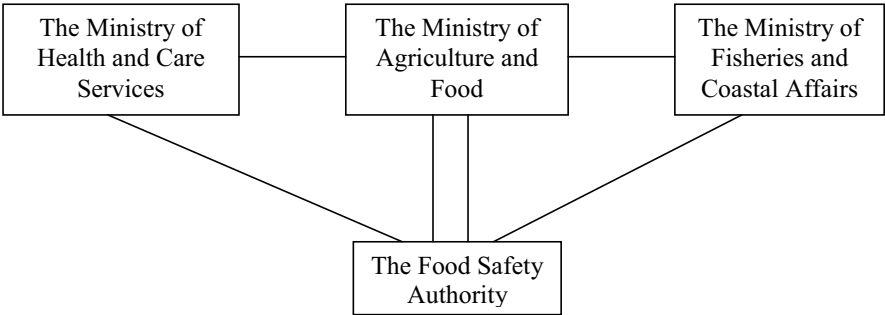


Figure 1: The inter-organizational structure of food safety issues in Norway after 2004

The main goals of Norway’s 2004 reform programme were to safeguard consumer health, ensure animal health and animal welfare, ensure healthy plants, ensure safe drinking water, and promote a consumer orientation in food policy. The NFSA has two main tasks: conducting food safety inspections of businesses (such as restaurants and farms), and performing directorate tasks (regulation).

The reform encompassed four main changes. *First*, the reform introduced a single act that replaced five major acts and eight special acts, and thus covered most of the policy field. The new Food Act contributed to greater clarity, and made regulatory supervision easier, because inter-organizational coordination became simpler with a single act. Norwegian politicians drew some inspiration from the Food Law implemented in the EU, for two reasons. Norway implements much EU legislation, as it is party (along with Iceland and Liechtenstein), to the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA). In addition, it is beneficial to observe the costs and benefits attached to other countries' or international institutions' implementation of new food regulation before implementing a new act in Norway. Such inspiration can increase the chances of implementing appropriate solutions that have positive effects, and reduce the chances of inappropriate solutions that may have negative effects. For example, the EU Food Law and the Norwegian Food Act stress the food chain – from 'earth and sea to table'. Further, both the Food Law and the Food Act provide that businesses are to be responsible for ensuring that food is safe.

In addition to the Norwegian Food Act, several other Acts cover important responsibilities of the NFSA: Act concerning the welfare of animals, Act relating to cosmetic products and body care products, Act relating to veterinarians and other health personnel, and Act concerning breeding of animals.

Second, before the implementation of the 2004 reform, several inspection bodies and agencies were responsible for food safety issues: the Food Inspection Authority (*Næringsmiddeltilsynet*), the Agricultural Inspection Service (*Landbrukstilsynet*), the Animal Health Authority (*Dyrehelsetilsynet*), and a department within the Directorate of Fisheries (*del av Fiskeridirektoratet*). Moreover, inspections and other control tasks were carried out by 89 municipal inspection bodies (*kommunale næringsmiddeltilsyn*). These inspection bodies and agencies were merged, and the political and administrative leaders implemented

in 2004 a single food safety agency: the Norwegian Food Safety Authority (*Mattilsynet*). The municipalities no longer have formal responsibility for food safety issues. The state took this over in 2004.

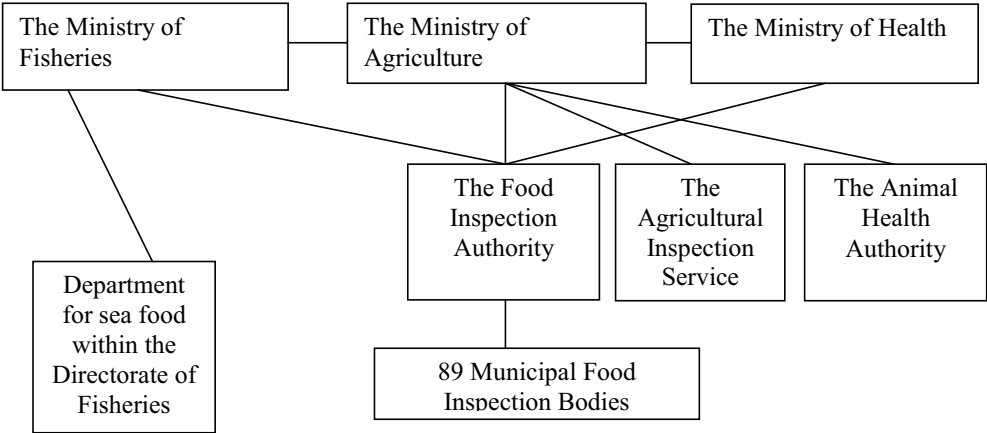


Figure 2: The inter-organizational structure of food safety issues in Norway *before* 2004

The government established the NFSA in 2004. Its head office in Oslo was given responsibility for 8 regional offices, 64 district offices, and 5 national centres spread around the country. The national centres were subordinated to regional offices, but reported directly to the head office (Report 2006a). Over time, several district offices have been merged, and so the number of district offices has decreased from 64 to 54. While the district offices handle individual inspections, each regional office coordinates the activities of the district offices in its region. The head office has the power to instruct the regional offices, and the regional offices may in turn instruct the district offices.

Third, the 2004 reform altered ministerial responsibilities. Although the same three ministries are politically responsible for the NFSA, the reform changed the division of labour

between them. Before the reform in 2004, the ministries were responsible for several inspection bodies and agencies (Elvbakken and Rykkja 2006; Report 2006a). The Food Inspection Authority was the most similar to the present agency, the NFSA, because it was also affiliated with three ministries: the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Fisheries, and the Ministry of Health. The Agricultural Inspection Service and the Animal Health Authority were subordinate to the Ministry of Agriculture. Moreover, the Directorate of Fisheries, which reports to the Ministry of Fisheries, performed some tasks that were transferred to the NFSA. The municipalities also bore important responsibilities, but these were transferred to the state (Asdal 2005).

However, an independent committee established in the mid-1990s (NOU 1996:10) argued that one ministry, the Ministry of Health, should be responsible for any new food safety agency, in addition to only having one agency and one food act. The committee also strongly recommended a reform programme featuring solutions contrary to those that were finally implemented. Since the Ministry of Agriculture pursued commercial interests, the committee recommended that agricultural issues be separated from food safety issues. It argued that attaching the food safety agency to the Ministry of Health would make it possible to avoid role confusion (NOU 1996:10).

The discussion of Elvbakken and Rykkja (2006, p. 127), based on a note by the Ministry of Agriculture (Ministry of Agriculture 1997) states that the Ministry of Health was positive towards the conclusion of this report. By contrast, the Ministry of Agriculture disagreed with the conclusion. The Ministry of Agriculture argued that it should instead have greater influence, because the chain from 'earth/sea to table' (*fra jord/sjø til bord*) required the involvement of a ministry responsible for agricultural products. At the same time as the committee published its report (NOU 1996:10), the Ministry of Agriculture published a white paper (White Paper no. 40 (1996/1997)). Elvbakken and Rykkja (2006, p. 128) argue

that the white paper defended the Ministry of Agriculture's responsibility for food safety issues, and therefore challenged the arguments of the committee.

The Ministry of Agriculture largely succeeded with its argument. Today, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food shares professional responsibility for food safety issues with the two other ministries, but is also responsible for administrative matters, such as inter-organizational coordination of the steering dialogue; the expectation letter, budgeting, reporting, planning and meetings. The Ministry of Health secured responsibility for the process leading up to a new Food Act, while the Ministry of Agriculture secured responsibility for the process leading up to the establishment of a new food safety agency.

A food safety reform could also have adopted other organizational structures. A first alternative would have been to merge the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Fisheries into a single, large Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The new food safety agency could then have been subordinated to this new ministry. Such a 'super ministry' would have ensured that matters linked to primary businesses were dealt with by a single ministry.

A second alternative would have been to attach the food safety agency to two ministries – the Ministry of Health and a new Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Including the Ministry of Health would have ensured that sufficient account was taken of consumer health.

A third alternative would have been to transfer ministerial responsibility from the Ministry of Fisheries, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Health to a new Ministry for Consumer Affairs. The main advantage would be to have one ministry responsible for food safety issues and focus on consumers. The disadvantage would be the exclusion of three important ministries from the food safety field.

A fourth alternative would have been either the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Agriculture responsible for the food safety agency. On the one hand, such a solution would reduce the chances of eliminating horizontal inter-organizational challenges. On the other hand, important considerations would be left out in food safety issues.

Fourth, the reform established a clear distinction between risk assessment and risk management. Most countries distinguish between risk assessment and risk management in the administration of this field. Risk assessment means measuring the likelihood of food safety crises and threats to human health (MHCS 2003). Risk management means making use of such assessments, and finding out when and how the government should adopt measures to deal with identified risks. The NFSA has operational and professional responsibility for risk management, while the three ministries are responsible at the superior political level. By contrast, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has responsibility for risk assessment, but not risk management (Buonanno 2006). The Chief Executive of the NFSA describes the model as follows:

“We [NFSA] are risk managers together with the ministries in the sense that it is the ministries that specify the actual level of protection.”

(Chief Executive Joakim Lystad, NFSA)

The reform separated risk assessment from risk management, and placed the two functions in different organizations. The reformers thus prevented risk managers from influencing risk assessors. The underlying thought is that scientific advice should be separated from political considerations. According to Skarstad (2007), the Scientific Committee on Food Safety (*Vitenskapskomiteen for mattrygghet*) is responsible for risk assessments.

In addition, the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (*Nasjonalt Folkehelseinstitutt*), the National Veterinary Institute (*Veterinærinstituttet*), and the Norwegian School of Veterinary Science (*Veterinærhøgskolen*) perform tasks connected to risk assessment. The

ministries are politically responsible for food safety issues, but are *unable* to issue instructions to these agencies in connection with risk assessments. Such assessment is therefore formally independent of political considerations (Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food Safety 2008).

In 2007, the NFSA introduced a structural change to the food safety agency. The national centres had been subordinate to the regional offices, but still reported to the head office. This complicated organizational structure made it very difficult to identify responsibilities. This became very apparent during the 2006 *E.coli* outbreak in Norway and, as a result, changes were made to the structure of the head office (see the last part of this chapter for a discussion of the *E.coli* outbreak). This structural change incorporated various measures. Since the 5 national centres had an unclear position within the hierarchy of the NFSA, they were abolished, and their tasks were assigned to the head office. Nevertheless, the functions of the head office are still spread around the country, although most are located in Oslo.

Further, the existence of multiple departments within the NFSA head office challenged vertical *inter-organizational* coordination processes between the head office and the 8 regional offices. The regional offices contacted the appropriate head-office department when clarification was required. Then, it became difficult for the head office to deal with these requests, and at the same time ensure horizontal coordination between its departments. The head office struggled to coordinate the challenges that the regional and district offices encountered in their day-to-day activities. Following the structural change, the head office now has three main departments (in addition to the communications staff and the staff responsible for analysis and steering): a regulatory department, a supervisory department, and an administrative department. The regulatory department is responsible for regulations and rule-making. Norway adopts much EU legislation through the European Economic Area

Agreement. Therefore, most Norwegian regulations are harmonized with EU legislation. The supervisory department is the link between the head office and the regional offices, and deals with issues linked to supervision. The administrative department deals with administrative issues.

Now, when the regional offices have questions, for example about the interpretation of regulations, they contact the supervisory department. The department then ensures horizontal coordination processes with the appropriate departments at the head office. It is therefore easier than before for the regional offices to establish vertical coordination processes with the head office.

By merging several agencies into one agency, the Norwegian government wanted to save NOK 100 million through the 2004 food safety reform. The government argued that merging the agencies would increase cost efficiency, because a single agency would require fewer resources than multiple agencies. Additionally, administrative leaders in a single, large agency can channel resources into fields, which have the greatest needs. The aim of this type of strategy seems to be to 'do more with less'. Such cost efficiency is an important element of NPM. 'The main hypothesis of NPM reforms is that *increased market orientation and management leads to increased efficiency, without causing negative side effects for other goals and concerns*' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 158).

However, pursuing cost efficiency is easier in theory than in practice. Although the government has reduced the budget by NOK 100 million, the NFSA does not 'do more with less', according to several interview respondents (interviews from 2007). Due to the reduced budget, the NFSA is not managing to do more than, or even as much as, it managed before the reduction. However, measuring the link between the budget and the quantity and quality of food safety inspections is extremely difficult. In addition, such measurements take up too

much time and energy that could be spent on more valuable activities. Therefore, it is not easy to determine whether the NZFSA achieves more or less with fewer economic resources.

In Norway, the NFSA has struggled with intra-organizational cultural issues, due to the merger of the different agencies. In some agencies, the inspectors operated as controllers, while in others they had more of a supervisory role. Such cultural differences can create difficulties when a new agency introduces a new inspector/supervisory role (Graham-Haga 2007). Cultural features that have a long history make change difficult, and altering them often takes a long time. The old agencies were 'value-bearing institutions with their own distinct identities and opinions about what the relevant problems and appropriate solutions are' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 10).

Nevertheless, the administrative leaders of the NFSA have tried to build a common and integrated culture, for example by arranging joint meetings for leaders. However, cultural design is a challenge. 'A design strategy presupposes that leaders have enough insight into the cultural changes needed, and also have at their disposal the means or devices as well as the power to carry them out' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 167). According to the interview respondents, after several years in operation, the NFSA seems to have a more integrated culture than when it was established. However, it constantly faces the task of ensuring coordination between the head office, the 8 region offices, and the 54 district offices. This complicated formal structure makes building an integrated culture difficult. The NFSA's offices are spread around the country, and cultural integration is hindered by both structural and physical barriers. It has proved easier to ensure cultural integration within a single organizational unit than between distinct organizational units, even though all units are under the umbrella of the NFSA.

6.3 Horizontal and vertical inter-organizational processes

Chapter two demonstrated that several factors may either prevent or promote strong coordination between organizations. Using these factors as evaluation criteria provides important insights into how inter-organizational processes operate in Norway.

The first factor that promotes inter-organizational coordination is a clear division of labour between relevant organizations. A clear division of labour between the ministries, and between the ministries and a subordinate agency, may promote inter-organizational coordination. By contrast, an unclear division of labour can prevent inter-organizational coordination, because it increases the possibility of overlaps or grey zones, which make coordination difficult (Peters 1998; Bakvis and Juillet 2004). Assigning clear responsibility for various public tasks will always be important, and such clear responsibilities require a clear division of labour.

Some interview respondents in this dissertation perceived the division of labour to be quite clear, because of the new Food Act. Amending the legislative framework may be a strategy for clarifying responsibilities. By creating a new Food Act, the reformers wanted to make it easier for the ministries to deal with food safety issues, to ensure better inter-organizational coordination, and to create clearer roles and responsibilities. Nevertheless, the division of labour is not absolutely clear, such as in food labelling rules. Discussions and negotiations sometimes take place between the three ministries in connection with issues that challenge the division of labour due to the differing perspectives and focuses of the three ministries.

Other interview respondents agreed that the Food Act was clear enough, but argued that the main problem was not legislative. Rather, the distinction between professional and administrative issues caused problems, and legislation could not regulate such issues in detail. Three ministries share professional responsibility for food safety issues, while the

MAF also bears the administrative responsibility. The latter includes inter-organizational coordination of the steering dialogue; the budget process, the expectation letter, planning activities, meetings and reporting.

One interview respondent argued that the MAF has more power in relation to food safety issues than the other two ministries, because a combination of administrative responsibility and professional responsibility brings with it greater influence than professional responsibility alone. In addition, the MAF dedicates more resources in the form of staff to work on food safety issues than the two other ministries. These resources increase the ministry's structural capacity and power relative to the other two ministries. One reason for this development may be that the MHCS has responsibility for a very broad policy field that encompasses various important tasks (for example hospitals), and therefore has less capacity for dealing with food safety issues.

However, some interview respondents argued that the MAF sometimes does not have a clear perception of the distinction between administrative and professional responsibility, and therefore on occasion exceeds the limits of its actual responsibility:

“Being tasked with coordinating the administrative steering signals is different from being tasked with coordinating food policy. In that area, we [the three ministries] may have discussions from time to time.”

(Secretary General Anne Kari Lande Hasle, MHCS)

The three ministries also disagree about professional issues and the division of labour between the three ministries:

“There are probably still some differences of opinion regarding the division of authority between the ministries when it comes to food labelling rules, and we [the three ministries] have initiated efforts to better clarify the division of authority.”

(Deputy Director General Gunnar Hagen, MAF)

The second factor that promotes inter-organizational coordination is arenas for coordination, in which civil servants establish decision-making rules, share information, discuss policy and make decisions. If such arenas do not exist, inter-organizational coordination may be prevented (Jacobsen 1993). Prior to 2004, exchanges between the three ministries were less formalized, less systematic and less frequent, according to several interview respondents. Inter-organizational fragmentation was therefore a characteristic feature of the interaction between the ministries before the implementation of the food safety reform in 2004.

The three ministries have meeting arenas for inter-organizational coordination. The reform implemented in 2004 made the inter-organizational coordination meeting arenas more formalized and systematic, and increased the frequency of interaction. How systematic and frequent interaction is, depends on the hierarchical level at which it takes place. For example, meetings about national food safety issues are held every Monday at deputy director general level (some advisers and senior advisers also attend). However, the food safety agency does not participate in these meetings. In addition, the three ministries, the food safety agency and other relevant external institutions have a telephone meeting every Monday morning to ensure inter-organizational coordination. Moreover, in individual cases, there is continuous e-mail and telephone contact between the ministries. Furthermore, the three ministries meet the food safety agency every Friday to discuss EU-related issues. Such EU issues are important to Norway, since Norway is not a member of the EU but the EEA. Norway therefore needs to pursue clear positions in working groups under the European Commission.

The Secretary Generals of the ministries, who represent the highest hierarchical level, meet when required. The three ministries thus deal with most issues at the lowest hierarchical level, although the participants in these meetings sometimes need to discuss

issues with their superiors before presenting arguments in the meeting arenas or after the meetings. In addition, one interview respondent argued that although the three Secretary Generals meet infrequently, they attend the weekly meetings of the Secretary Generals of all 18 ministries in Norway, and so have the opportunity to discuss food safety issues informally.

Christensen *et al.* (2007a, p. 13) distinguish between two types of decision-making. ‘First, decisions directed outwards – towards citizens, user groups and clients’. ‘Second, decisions in public organizations can be directed towards internal organization’. Both types of decision can affect inter-organizational food safety coordination.

The meeting arenas form a matrix structure: several units are ‘subordinated to several superior units simultaneously’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 26). This allows food safety cases to be passed on to the next hierarchical level (for example from the Deputy Director Generals of the three ministries to the Director Generals) if the ministries disagree on an important issue, or if an issue is so controversial that it requires political and/or higher administrative attention. However, one interview respondent expressed scepticism about passing cases further up the hierarchy:

“The higher up in the hierarchy you come, the less awareness people have of the fact that the model is a bit more complicated, and the faster someone messes it up.”

(Senior Adviser Halvard Kvamsdal, MHCS)

One explanation for this statement may be that only more complicated cases and cases involving more overtly political considerations will be referred to the higher hierarchical levels. An alternative explanation may be that those at the top of the hierarchy, i.e. the political and administrative leaders, do not have day-to-day information and knowledge about how cases are usually resolved. Therefore, there may be a mismatch between the perceptions of organization members at different hierarchical levels.

The steering dialogue between the ministries and the food safety agency includes budgeting, reporting, planning and meetings. Approximately four formal meetings are held each year in addition to informal meetings. At these, the ministries and the food safety agency discuss past, current and future challenges. These meetings help to build a shared understanding of current and potential problems and challenges and, further, allow the ministries to highlight issues, to which the food safety agency needs to pay more attention. The food safety agency also submits an annual report that discusses, for example, goal achievement, the financial situation, and the kinds of challenges that require a stronger focus.

However, there were instances where civil servants in the ministries contacted civil servants in the NFSA outside the formal inter-organizational coordination processes. The leaders of the NFSA tried to eliminate these informal vertical inter-organizational processes, because they competed with the formal processes. The reasoning behind this step was that such inter-organizational processes could compete with, rather than supplement, the formal inter-organizational coordination processes, due to the scarcity of time in the agency. The agency succeeded in reducing these informal inter-organizational processes.

According to one interview respondent, various informal inter-organizational meetings take place outside the formal steering dialogue. However, not all informal meetings compete with the formal ones:

“There are many ‘informal’ meetings and ad hoc meetings about current cases that take place outside the ordinary steering dialogue with the Food Safety Authority. I cannot recall any example of such meetings conflicting with the ordinary steering dialogue.”

(Deputy Director General Gunnar Hagen, MAF)

Another interview respondent argued that the three ministries differ in how they conduct inter-organizational coordination with the NFSA, and that the MHCS is less active than the two other ministries:

“I believe that many more telephone calls are made between the Food Safety Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs than are made between the Food Safety Authority and the Ministry of Health and Care Services.”

(Senior Adviser Halvard Kvamsdal, MHCS)

The actual division of labour between the three ministries and the NFSA is much clearer in relation to inspections than in relation to directorate issues. What are the differences between these two roles? In its role as a directorate, the NFSA advises the ministries and participates in for example EU processes to present the Norwegian position on behalf of the ministries, or to contribute with professional expertise in various cases. The directorate role is a much smaller part of the NFSA's work than the inspection role. The inspection role involves conducting individual inspections of businesses that produce, refine and sell food products, such as farms or grocery stores. In its role as an inspector of businesses, the NFSA has great autonomy, both from businesses and from the ministries.

One of the main objectives of the reform programme was to establish a clear distinction between political issues (which require political attention), and technical issues (which require professional attention). The ministries prefer to concentrate on acting as secretariats for the political leadership, and take such political issues into account. Acting as a secretariat for the political leadership means being involved in policy-making, and giving advice to the minister and the government in cases that are politically important. If ministries are to function as secretariats for the political leadership, they need to concentrate on policy issues rather than technical issues. There are two reasons for this division of labour. First, unnecessary political interference can reduce professional consistency in individual inspections. Second, inspections require technical and professional competence that the ministries frequently do not have.

One interview respondent focused on how much autonomy the NFSA has from the three ministries, and concluded in 2007 that it has less than it should:

“I suppose that essentially we [MHCS] feel that the ministries are steering the Food Safety Authority too much, and that this steering dialogue is too active and detailed. The Ministry of Health and Care Services does not steer “its” subordinate agencies as actively as the three ministries steer the Food Safety Authority.”

(Senior Adviser Halvard Kvamsdal, MHCS)

Still, the same respondent argues in a following-up interview in 2010 that such autonomy requires a ‘mature’ agency, and that the steering dialogue should be an important instrument to ensure inter-organizational coordination and achievement of desired goals. Therefore, too much autonomy can reduce the achievement of such goals if the agency is not sufficiently mature.

One indicator of the degree of autonomy can be how often the ministries issue instructions to the agency in individual cases. The giving of instructions involves the ministries specifying how the food safety agency is to act in a case or situation, or deciding to alter a decision made by the food safety agency. Much autonomy can make inter-organizational vertical coordination more challenging. ‘One can either have greater control or more autonomy, but it is difficult to have both at the same time, or to find a stable balance between the two’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 154).

However, the ministries may instruct formally in both directorate issues and individual inspections, although such instructions are very rare, according to the interview respondents. Still, they have the formal power to do so in respect of both directorate issues and individual inspections. Rather, the ministries and the agency prefer to interact frequently on a formal and an informal basis to discuss issues and find good solutions.

However, the interview respondents disagreed about whether or not the food safety agency had been given instructions during its first five years of operation. Some respondents argued that the ministries had never done so:

“I am not aware of the ministries having issued instructions to the Food Safety Authority in individual cases.”

(Deputy Director General Gunnar Hagen, MAF)

Other respondents argued that the ministries had instructed the agency once or twice since the reform was implemented, but did not present any concrete examples. One interview respondent argued that the agency had been instructed in ‘few cases’:

“We [NFSA] have had few cases where the ministries have issued formal instructions to proceed in a different direction than the one we [NFSA] wanted to pursue, or where they have taken over the handling of individual cases themselves.”

(Chief Executive Joakim Lystad, NFSA)

Another respondent identified variation both from case to case and over time, and found it difficult to categorize the level of involvement:

“There is a little variation in the extent to which the ministries can examine details and individual cases; there are several factors that can come into play: the specifics of the individual case, who handles the case in the ministries and in our organization, and external factors. It is difficult to categorize.”

(Director Kari Bryhni, NFSA)

In any event, the ministries seldom issue instructions to the NFSA, and the frequent interaction between the ministries and the food safety agency may serve to reduce the demand for formal instructions. For example, one interview respondent stated that:

“In some cases, there has been informal contact between the leadership of the Food Safety Authority and the ministries prior to a decision being made.”

(Deputy Director General Gunnar Hagen, MAF)

The third factor that promotes inter-organizational coordination is common goals. By contrast, significantly conflicting goals may hinder such coordination (Alexander 1995; State Services Commission 2008). Public sector organizations always operate in political contexts, which feature conflicts due to scarce resources, negotiation and diverging interests (Bolman and Deal 2007). The organization of food safety has been ‘contested’ in various countries for precisely this reason (Ansell and Vogel 2006, p. 10). Conflicts should be expected not only in relation to policy outcomes, but also in relation to organizational structures. Several studies from other countries have revealed conflicts between ministries over food safety issues, especially between agricultural ministries and health ministries. The UK has experienced such conflicts in the 1990s (Ansell 2006; Rykkja 2008a).

Prior to Norway’s food safety reform, various actors debated the organization of food safety issues. However, no major debates have arisen since 2004. Nevertheless, after the 2009 parliamentary election, some Norwegian newspapers speculated that the MFCA would be abolished, and that its functions would be moved to other ministries. These speculations did not come true, however.

What about conflicts in day-to-day inter-organizational coordination? Conflicts are rather rare, as the ministries use the inter-organizational meeting arenas to discuss problematic issues:

“We [the three ministries] very seldom use these arenas to clarify difficult cases. They are generally used for the steering dialogue. Still, cases may sometimes arise in which there is disagreement.”

(Former Deputy Director General Hege Nygård Wetland, MAF)

An interview respondent from the MHCS agreed with this statement:

“I believe it works very well. We [the three ministries] may still disagree sometimes, but that is an entirely different matter.”

(Secretary General Anne Kari Lande Hasle, MHCS)

Another interview respondent from the MHCS also agreed with this statement:

“There is very little disagreement about the fundamentals of food policy.”

(Senior Adviser Halvard Kvamsdal, MHCS)

On the one hand, having three ministries responsible for the NFSA ensures the integration of values from three different policy fields. The integration of such values requires inter-organizational coordination processes, and helps to balance health concerns against agricultural interests and fisheries. An integration of values can therefore lead to better decisions, since public and state-sector organizations frequently need to balance different and sometimes conflicting interests. In practice, the ministries use the available meeting arenas for inter-organizational coordination processes, and conflicts are rare. Moreover, the MAF and the MFCA have a common interest in achieving food safety, because pests and diseases could threaten businesses, and Norway’s reputation as an exporter of quality products.

On the other hand, the Norwegian MAF’s focus on agricultural issues must be regarded as a pursuit of business interests, as it involves the promotion of farm products. The MFCA also focuses on business interests, by promoting fish products and export to other countries. Such conflicting goals have been a major problem in various countries. In the UK, for example, health considerations have clashed with agricultural interests (Rykkja 2008a, p. v). The MHCS, by contrast, focuses only on health issues and food safety, and is thus not

involved in protecting business interests linked to food safety. Therefore, food safety issues rarely conflict with health issues.

Nevertheless, the ministries do pursue different interests, which may come into conflict, and this affects the inter-organizational coordination processes between them:

“The coordination works well, but the fact that there are three ministries, some of which have slightly different interests and roles, means that there will be periods during which we [the three ministries] are pulling in opposite directions.”

(Director General Magnor Nerheim, MFCA)

This statement illustrates something important about inter-organizational coordination. On the one hand, coordination between ministries may be quite strong. On the other hand, such coordination may always be challenging because of various roles and interests.

The name of an organization can also play a significant role, and signal ownership of a policy field. The Ministry of Agriculture changed its name to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food as part of the 2004 reform programme, in order to symbolize that it had gained greater power over food safety issues, and that it expends more resources than the other ministries (Asdal 2005). For example, the MAF has a whole department, Department of Food Policy, which deals with issues related to the food safety agency. By contrast, the MHCS only has a section that deals with such issues; Section for nutrition and food safety. This illustrates that the MAF expends more resources on food safety issues, than for example the MHCS. The fact that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food has ‘Food’ in its name is an interesting observation, as the MFCA also focuses on other food products, namely fish.

The fourth factor that promotes inter-organizational coordination is active leadership. By contrast, a lack of active leadership and/or a lead organization may prevent inter-organizational coordination (Alexander 1995). The MAF acts as the lead ministry on

administrative issues, coordinating the weekly meetings between the three ministries and supplying the meeting's chairperson (a MAF Deputy Director General).

However, the Deputy Director General who chairs the meetings does not issue instructions. Instead, she tries to facilitate discussions and find solutions that are appropriate for the actors representing the three ministries. At the weekly meetings, staff members discuss cases, and the best arguments usually play a significant role. A 'give and take attitude' is often a vital component of such network meetings. Accordingly, the Deputy Director General has the challenging task of finding good solutions, and at the same time ensuring that the three ministries are satisfied with them.

The fifth factor that promotes inter-organizational coordination is positive attitudes. Positive attitudes will frequently be rooted in the organizational culture. By contrast, negative attitudes combined with unclear obligations may easily lead to a prevention of inter-organizational coordination (Whetten 1982). The respondents in this dissertation expressed positive attitudes, and clearly perceived themselves as being obliged to participate in inter-organizational coordination processes. They also appeared to be dedicated to their roles in the food safety system, which most likely promotes inter-organizational coordination.

Connected to the last point, inter-organizational coordination is promoted when mutual trust and positive experiences work together efficiently. Distrust and negative experiences may challenge inter-organizational coordination processes (Alexander 1995). Trust will always be an important element of the efforts of organization members to act appropriately. The interview respondents stated that the participants in the inter-organizational meetings make positive reports regarding inter-organizational coordination, and that their positive experiences promote coordination. Although the ministries have different objectives, they pursue them in a friendly way. Nevertheless, ensuring inter-

organizational coordination in every single decision can sometimes be frustrating for the participants in such processes, as coordination can be both time-consuming and energy-intensive. It takes time to find good solutions.

Prior to the implementation of the reform programme in 2004, the inter-organizational meetings were fragmented and less systematic than today. The three ministries were responsible for several inspection bodies and agencies, and the division of labour between them was quite unclear. Accordingly, the three ministries did not have any systematic experience of regular inter-organizational processes.

The sixth factor that promotes inter-organizational coordination is short geographical distances and/or shared IT systems. By contrast, long geographical distances and/or a lack of shared IT systems may prevent inter-organizational coordination processes. Frequently, inter-organizational coordination processes require face-to-face contact to work efficiently (Egeberg 1994; Egeberg 2003). The three ministries and the head office of the NFSA are all located in Oslo. (The three ministries lie within walking distance of each other, while the food safety agency is a ten-minute bus ride from the ministries.) Accordingly, establishing face-to-face contact is not a problem, and this close geographical proximity makes inter-organizational coordination much easier.

Inter-organizational coordination processes will frequently be stronger when the number of organizations involved remains small. Since such inter-organizational coordination processes require resources, coordinating with a single agency (rather than multiple inspection bodies and agencies), is obviously advantageous. Accordingly, merging different agencies into a single body increases the capacity of the ministries to ensure greater inter-organizational coordination. Finally, having one agency makes it easier to focus resources on demanding tasks. The merger of several inspection bodies and agencies into a single food safety agency has made it easier to build systematic meeting arenas for inter-

organizational coordination, both vertical and horizontal. The founding of one overarching agency has therefore made it easier to ensure oversight for the relevant ministries. Nevertheless, three ministries are involved in inter-organizational coordination processes, which require many resources. By contrast to the organizational structure in Norway, several countries have given responsibility for their food safety agencies to a single ministry, rather than several.

The seventh factor is the outcome these inter-organizational processes, which is strong coordination, according to the interview respondents.

6.4 Discussion of findings

The instrumental-hierarchical perspective suggests that political and administrative leaders implement reforms to achieve desired outcomes, such as better consumer health. ‘Although the formal organizational structure does not necessarily indicate anything about actual behaviour of members in an organization, it will constrain how tasks are carried out’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 27). Countries may implement reforms for two main reasons (See chapter one for a complete discussion of reasons).

First, a crisis, for example an *E.coli* outbreak, may reveal weaknesses in the organizational structures selected to resolve food safety issues. A reform can therefore solve capacity problems. Second, political and administrative leaders occasionally implement reforms to reduce the risk of a crisis arising, or to increase problem-handling capacity. Norway provides an example of the latter reason. In the terminology of the instrumental-hierarchical perspective, planning for the future will often be a rational risk-reduction strategy. How do the horizontal inter-organizational coordination processes actually work in Norway? Moreover, how can the theoretical perspectives explain the findings?

The first factor is how clear the division of labour between the ministries, and between the ministries and the food safety agency, really is. The empirical findings supported the instrumental-hierarchical perspective in relation to this factor. The three other theoretical perspectives were not supported. The instrumental-hierarchical perspective suggests that a clear division of labour makes a significant contribution to the outcome of strong coordination, because it both ensures a focus on specific tasks and delimits other tasks. The division of labour, both between the three ministries and between the ministries and the agency, is fairly clear.

Nevertheless, the division of labour is not absolutely clear, such as in food labelling rules. Discussions and negotiations sometimes take place between the three ministries in connection with issues that challenge the division of labour due to the differing perspectives and focuses of the three ministries. Accordingly, the instrumental-negotiation perspective explains the empirical findings, albeit less comprehensively than the instrumental-hierarchical perspective.

The instrumental-hierarchical perspective also explains the division of labour between the three ministries and the food safety agency. Still, it is important to distinguish between inspections and directorate issues. NFSA is much clearer with regard to inspections than with regard to directorate issues. In its role as a directorate, the NFSA advises the ministries and contributes to rule-making and regulations. In its role as an inspector of businesses, the NFSA has great autonomy, both from businesses and from the three ministries. The ministries have delegated the inspection role to the food safety agency, preferring to concentrate on acting as secretariats for the political leadership. The boundaries between professional issues and political issues have therefore become clearer since the 2004 reform, supporting the expectation from the instrumental-hierarchical perspective.

There are four reasons for the delegation by the ministries to the food safety agency. First, unnecessary political interference can reduce consistency in individual inspections. Second, inspections require technical and professional competence that the ministries frequently do not have. However, the ministries can interfere formally in both directorate issues and individual inspections, although such interventions are very rare. The ministries and the food safety agency prefer to ensure inter-organizational coordination through frequent formal and informal interaction, rather than formal instructions. The ministries therefore rarely issue instructions to the agency, even though they have a formal power to do so in respect of both directorate issues and individual inspections. Third, such instructions may challenge the division of labour between the ministries and the food safety agency, because the division of labour is based on the concept of Management by Objectives and Results (MBOR). The ministries formulate goals, and the food safety agency identifies methods for achieving those goals. Instructions may challenge this division of labour if the ministries also propose methods. Fourth, the food safety agency may find it *inappropriate* to be instructed by the ministries. Instructions may cause tensions to arise between the ministries and the food safety agency.

In the specific case of Norway, the ministries use the steering dialogue; the expectation letter, the budget process, planning and reporting to express expectations to the NFSA. Further, the NFSA informs the ministries about individual cases that may become political issues. In addition, the ministries frequently interact with the NFSA to obtain information about individual cases that they consider important. Nevertheless, the fact that the ministries issue very few, or no, instructions seems to indicate that they believe that most individual cases do not involve controversial political or professional issues, on which the ministries and the NFSA disagree. However, the lack of instructions could also be a result of '*anticipated reactions*'. This term describes the situation where political and administrative

leaders affect 'decisions without participating directly, for other actors can base their actions on insight into what leaders *would do* without them needing to be physically present' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 34).

According to the institutional-cultural perspective, decisions made in the past will always affect present and future decision-making processes. The NFSA may therefore act on the basis of past decisions, i.e. make decisions knowing that the ministries will accept them as appropriate solutions. Over a prolonged period, the experiences gained through such decision-making will increase organizational knowledge. It takes time for agency staff to learn that some issues are more politically relevant than others, and that it is appropriate to consult the ministries on relevant issues at an early stage.

The second factor is meeting arenas for inter-organizational coordination between the ministries, as well as between the ministries and the food safety agency. Formal inter-organizational meetings take place both between the three ministries, as well as between the ministries and the food safety agency. This fact supports the instrumental-hierarchical perspective. However, in relation to national issues, the three ministries and the agency do not meet as frequently as the three ministries alone. In relation to international issues, however, and especially in relation to issues related to the EU, the ministries and the food safety agency meet every week. In contrast to the instrumental-hierarchical perspective, the institutional-myth perspective emphasizes a de-coupling of formal inter-organizational coordination from actual inter-organizational coordination, or a rejection of formal inter-organizational coordination. In the context of day-to-day coordination, the key empirical findings relating to the vertical and horizontal inter-organizational dimensions generally do not support this theoretical perspective.

The institutional-cultural perspective asserts that informal and case-by-case inter-organizational meetings may either compete with or supplement the formal inter-

organizational meetings. One interview respondent argued that informal contact between the ministries and the food safety agency could challenge the formal steering dialogue. Such contact could therefore compete with, rather than supplement, the formal inter-organizational meetings. However, the interview respondent argued that such informal contact has been reduced over time, following complaints by the food safety agency. One positive instrumental-hierarchical effect is that the three ministries appear (in most cases) to communicate consistent expectations to the agency, by investing so heavily in inter-organizational coordination meetings. Another interview respondent stated that informal contact takes place between the ministries and the food safety agency, but that the formal and informal meetings do not compete.

Arenas must be connected both vertically and horizontally if they are to produce the outcome of strong coordination. Such connections can, however, create tensions. Peters (1998, p. 302) states that strong vertical inter-organizational coordination processes, can compete with horizontal inter-organizational coordination processes. The reason may be that strong vertical inter-organizational processes restrict the room for manoeuvre of participants in decision-making that requires horizontal inter-organizational coordination, due to the procedures that regulate vertical coordination.

Nevertheless, Norway's sector-oriented central administration demands a combination of strong horizontal and vertical inter-organizational coordination processes (Christensen and Lægreid 2001a; Christensen and Lægreid 2002; Christensen and Lægreid 2008). Therefore, the coordination of food policy in Norway requires both vertical and horizontal links between the inter-organizational processes, even though establishing such links may present challenges. In general, the interview respondents reported that such vertical and horizontal inter-organizational links were being formed successfully. Still, the drawback is the time spent on such coordination.

The third factor is goals – how clear they were, how formal they were, and to what extent they conflicted. The instrumental-negotiation perspective asserts that unclear and significantly conflicting goals may hinder inter-organizational coordination, and cause tensions between the ministries. The three ministries share the goal of food safety, but two of the ministries also have other goals, such as protecting business interests (fish and agriculture), which could conflict with food safety. The empirical findings show that, in addition to food safety, the MAF and the MFCA have to take such business interests into account. In the inter-organizational arenas, discussions take place and disagreements arise in individual cases, but such discussions and disagreements do not undermine the common goal of ensuring that food is safe.

If the instrumental-negotiation perspective were to be supported by the empirical findings, a greater number of conflicts would have to be observed, both horizontally between the ministries and vertically between the ministries and the food safety agency. Making three ministries responsible for a single food safety agency can potentially produce conflicts, if many individual cases involve disagreements. Accordingly, the participants in horizontal inter-organizational coordination processes must have personal skills that enable them to find solutions that all of the ministries can accept. It is therefore clear that the empirical findings largely support the instrumental-hierarchical perspective. The two institutional perspectives, the institutional-cultural perspective and the institutional-myth perspective, do not say much about conflicting goals.

The fourth factor is leadership/steering, and how formal or informal it really is. The instrumental perspectives focus more on steering, while the institutional perspectives focus more on leadership. Distinguishing clearly between the two instrumental perspectives (the instrumental-hierarchical perspective and the instrumental-negotiation perspective), is not easy. The same can be said of the two institutional perspectives (the institutional-cultural

perspective and the institutional-myth perspective). It is therefore appropriate to distinguish simply between an instrumental and an institutional perspective in relation to leadership/steering. The instrumental perspective suggests that formal steering plays a significant role, because if disagreements arise between the three ministries at the lowest hierarchical level, the case will be referred up to the next hierarchical level.

The MAF plays an important role vis-à-vis the food safety agency in relation to administrative issues. A particular requirement of this administrative role is cultural leadership. The institutional perspective predicts that informal leadership will play a significant role in the weekly inter-organizational meetings. At these meetings, a 'give and take' attitude is important, and the MAF chairperson is not responsible for 'steering' the participants, in contrast to the prediction of the instrumental-hierarchical perspective. The chairperson is required to focus on facilitating decision-making, and on proposing decisions that all three ministries can accept. According to the institutional-cultural perspective, this facilitator role demands informal cultural leadership, rather than formal steering. Passive cultural leadership may easily contribute to conflicts, because it can be difficult to find appropriate solutions.

The fifth factor has two components: attitudes and trust. The researcher in this dissertation expected to find that attitudes (positive versus negative), towards inter-organizational coordination and the degree of trust (low, medium, high), between the actors play a significant role in relation to issues that require inter-organizational coordination. On the one hand, the two institutional perspectives focus more on trust and attitudes than the two instrumental perspectives.

On the other hand, it is extremely difficult to differentiate between the theoretical perspectives when explaining these components. The empirical findings show that the actors have a fairly positive attitude towards inter-organizational coordination, and that they trust

each other. Trust may also be linked to obligation. If actors have a clear formal obligation to participate in inter-organizational processes trust may be less important, because the actors need to participate regardless of trust.

Several of the participants have been involved in the inter-organizational coordination meeting arenas for a long time. Positive personal chemistry between participants in inter-organizational coordination meetings always plays a significant role.

Nevertheless, handling inter-organizational coordination processes will always be challenging in difficult cases. Several actors have stated that having three ministries involved in the inter-organizational coordination processes demands significant resources, because the actors meet every week. This suggests that making a single ministry responsible for the food safety agency could ensure greater efficiency. However, involving three ministries ensures that decisions are of a higher quality, because more critical objections will be presented with three ministries present than if only one ministry is involved.

The sixth factor has two components: the geographical distance between the organizations, and the number of organizations involved. The geographical distance between the three ministries is small, and all are located within walking distance of each other. According to the instrumental-hierarchical perspective, geographical distance may cause problems with coordination, because it makes face-to-face coordination difficult. The institutional-cultural perspective, on the other hand, focuses on the difficulties attached to building a common organizational culture when units are separated geographically. Further, the geographical distance between the ministries and the head office of the food safety agency is small (approximately ten minutes by bus). Within the NFSA, the distance between units is much greater, because the agency covers the entire country. The number of ministries formally involved in the steering of the national food safety agency is higher in Norway than in various other countries, such as Sweden. The involvement of three ministries

makes inter-organizational coordination processes more challenging than would be the case if just one ministry were involved.

The seventh factor is the outcome: the interview respondents report strong coordination. Both the instrumental-hierarchical perspective and the institutional-cultural perspective predicated this outcome (the latter in situations where formal and informal processes are compatible).

Factors	The instrumental-hierarchical perspective	The instrumental-negotiation perspective	The institutional-cultural perspective	The institutional-myth perspective
Division of labour	x	(x)		
Meeting arenas	x		x	
Goals	x			
Leadership/steering			x	x
Attitudes and trust			x	x
Geographical distance/the number of organizations involved	x	x	x	x
Outcome	x		x	

Table 2: Inter-organizational coordination in day-to-day food safety issues in Norway.

6.5 The *E.coli* outbreak in Norway

In many countries, reforms are triggered by food safety crises. However, this has not been the case in Norway. Rather, a contamination of food with *E.coli* caused a crisis in 2006 –

two years after the implementation of a reform programme in 2004. Eighteen people were infected, and one child died. The crisis required inter-organizational coordination of several state-sector organizations, both within and outside the central administration. Comparing inter-organizational coordination processes in a crisis situation with inter-organizational day-to-day coordination processes can be a useful means of gaining greater insight into inter-organizational coordination.

The National Institute of Public Health (NIPH) (*Folkehelseinstituttet*) played an important role in the *E.coli* crisis. It initially concluded that 'Gilde'-branded minced meat had induced the outbreak. Further investigation revealed that this was incorrect, and that 'certain types of cold-smoked fermented mutton sausage' had induced it (Report 2006a, p. 1).

Following the crisis, the Norwegian government established a committee with a mandate to evaluate the inter-organizational processes and to recommend improvements. 'The main objective was to provide recommendations to prevent the occurrence of such food-borne disease outbreaks in future and to be better prepared to deal with any such outbreaks that occur' (Report 2006a, p. 1). The committee published a report (2006a) containing evaluations and recommendations. In addition, the firm DNV Consulting carried out an evaluation for the NFSA (DNV Consulting 2006). These two reports produced important findings:

First, a clear division of labour may promote inter-organizational coordination processes. A clear division of labour will make inter-organizational coordination easier, because it clarifies responsibilities. Several organizations, at different levels, were involved in this crisis, but the division of labour between them was unclear. The NIPH played two very different roles during the crisis. It had an independent and leading role in providing independent knowledge and support to the NFSA, pursuant to the Act relating to control of

communicable diseases. Therefore, the NIPH operated according to the Act relating to control of communicable diseases, and the NFSA operated according to the Food Act. Still, the chief doctor in each municipality in Norway had a formal responsibility for control of communicable diseases. However, since this case had a national character, the NIPH played a significant informal role in it.

The committee therefore argued that several municipalities did not take the formal leadership role seriously. Informal inter-organizational coordination processes between the NIPH and the NFSA district offices functioned satisfactorily. A further conclusion was that the NFSA had struggled with intra-organizational coordination challenges due to its highly complex formal structure. One national NFSA centre became involved in the management of the *E.coli* outbreak, but role confusion within the links between the head office and the national centre constituted a significant accountability problem (Report 2006a).

In addition, the division of labour between the ministries was unclear at the start of the crisis. The MAF challenged the division of labour between the MAF and the MHCS by playing a greater informal role. Formal and informal responsibility was therefore decoupled. The MAF previously had greater responsibility for butchery hygiene, and its actions during the crisis were a path-dependent feature dating to this time. The advantage of path dependency is that civil servants base their actions on traditions and values that have worked efficiently in the past. Frequently, such traditions and values will affect present and future actions. The disadvantage, however, is that it will take a long time to implement a reform, and see its long-term effects.

Second, having arenas for coordination can promote inter-organizational coordination processes. The NFSA kept the MAF continually updated (not least by sending it copies of documents), and the MAF made sure that the NFSA had sufficient resources to deal with the crisis. Most interaction took place between the NFSA and the MHCS, however, because the

MHCS bore primary political responsibility for the crisis. As the NFSA had operational responsibility and the ministries did not, it handled the day-to-day operations. The participants struggled with two major challenges: the structural complexity of these operations and the different vertical levels involved (Report 2006a, chapter 3).

Third, the organizations involved in this crisis had a major common goal: to resolve the crisis and uncover the source of contamination. Accordingly, conflicting goals did not play a significant role in this crisis.

Fourth, active leadership may promote inter-organizational processes, because such leadership may be important for ensuring both focus and implementation of decisions. A major problem at ministry level was that the two ministries (the MAF and the MHCS) did not decide formally which one of them should take the role of a lead organization. According to the committee, appointing a lead organization would have been an important means of ensuring focus during the crisis. However, since the ministries did not have operational responsibility for the crisis, this did not play a significant role. A further problem was intra-organizational leadership within the NFSA, where a complicated formal structure created problems (DNV Consulting 2006; Report 2006a).

Fifth, a clear obligation to participate in inter-organizational coordination processes may promote inter-organizational coordination. Despite inter-organizational challenges, the NIPH and the NFSA shared a clear commitment to work together to resolve the crisis. The report by DNV Consulting (2006, p. 3) shows that the actors felt a clear obligation, and were committed, in this respect. A clear obligation may be linked to past experiences. However, this crisis was the first to arise subsequent to the 2004 food safety reforms. As a result, the organizations involved did not have previous experience, and required time to become accustomed to crisis conditions. Handling crises often demands practice, because crisis situations require speedy actions. In this case, giving one agency operational responsibility

made it easier to resolve the crisis than it would have been if several agencies had been involved, as would have been the case prior to the 2004 reforms (DNV Consulting 2006; Report 2006a).

Sixth, the two components geographical distance/shared IT-systems and the number of organizations involved play a significant role in inter-organizational coordination. Small geographical distances can promote inter-organizational coordination processes, as can IT systems that can compensate for large geographical distances. One problem during the *E.coli* crisis was that the NFSA head office transferred responsibility for the crisis to the NFSA national centre in Sandnes (located some 440 km from Oslo) for a brief period. This was also unfortunate because assigning responsibility to the head office in Oslo would have signalled that the NFSA was taking the crisis seriously. In addition, face-to-face contact may be important during such crises. However, responsibility for the crisis was transferred back to the Oslo head office after some time, as making the national centre responsible proved to be inefficient (Report 2006a).

Further, inter-organizational coordination will often be stronger when the number of organizations involved in such coordination remains low. Increasing the number of organizations frequently increases the challenges involved in inter-organizational coordination processes. This crisis required inter-organizational coordination between several municipalities, the NIPH, and the NFSA. Additionally, several organizational units within the NFSA had to be coordinated. Inter-organizational coordination was therefore a great challenge.

Seventh, the result was medium coordination, because the actors struggled with inter-organizational coordination.

6.6 Discussion of the findings

In the *E.coli* case, the administrative leaders of the NFSA worked hard to resolve the crisis, and succeeded in doing so. The instrumental-hierarchical perspective asserts that both intra-organizational and inter-organizational coordination were required to secure such resolution.

The first factor that promotes coordination is the division of labour. The findings show that this division was unclear both within the NFSA and between the MAF and the MHCS. During the *E.coli* crisis, the NFSA struggled with intra-organizational coordination, because it had a very complex organizational structure. In particular, there were weaknesses in the link between the head office and the national centres that were responsible initially. Inter-organizational coordination was also challenging at national level. The findings do not support the instrumental-hierarchical perspective. Rather, the findings seem to support the two institutional perspectives – the division of labour was hindered by both internal and external pressure. The fact that the MAF assumed a more informal role could easily have led to a situation of conflict and tension between the MAF and the MHCS. This would support the instrumental-negotiation perspective.

The second factor that promotes coordination is arenas for coordination. Such arenas existed both for the ministries and for the ministries and the food safety agency. The findings point in the direction of the instrumental-hierarchical perspective. However, the findings related to the operation of meetings within the NFSA (structural complexity and informal, undocumented contact between different levels), point in the direction of the institutional-cultural perspective.

The third factor that promotes coordination is common goals. During the *E.coli* crisis, the organizations involved all worked to resolve the crisis and uncover the source of contamination. Accordingly, conflicting goals did not play a significant role, and the instrumental-negotiation perspective therefore does not explain the empirical findings.

Rather, the instrumental-hierarchical perspective provides the main explanation as regards common goals.

The fourth factor that promotes coordination is active leadership. According to the report (2006a) on the *E.coli* crisis, the ministries should have appointed a lead ministry. The ministries did not do so, and so the institutional-cultural perspective provides an explanation. An additional factor is that the MAF challenged the division of labour between the MAF and the MHCS by playing a greater informal role. The MAF acted as though the inter-organizational division of labour between the ministries operated as before the reform introduced in 2004. Before 2004 the MAF had responsibility for controlling meat at the butcheries (Report 2006a, p. 82). Path-dependency may therefore be a relevant concept to explain this finding, where tradition plays a significant role. 'This means that the cultural norms and values that make their mark on an organization in its early and formative years will have great significance for the path of development it follows' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 45).

The fifth factor that promotes coordination has two aspects: attitudes and trust. The participants had a clear obligation to solve the case, because it involved human health. The participants also appear to have trusted each other, but the reports do not deal explicitly with this question. However, the empirical findings seem to support the two institutional perspectives.

The sixth factor that promotes coordination is a combination of a small geographical distance between the organizations and a small number of participants. The ministries and the head office of the NFSA are separated by only a short geographical distance. However, one problem that arose during the *E.coli* crisis was that the NFSA head office transferred responsibility for the crisis to the NFSA national centre in Sandnes (located some 440 km from Oslo), for a brief period. Moreover, many organizations participated in the inter-

organizational coordination of the crisis. Since the theoretical perspectives do not make any predictions in relation to this factor, they will not be discussed further in this context.

Factors	The instrumental-hierarchical perspective	The instrumental-negotiation perspective	The institutional-cultural perspective	The institutional-myth perspective
Division of labour			x	x
Meeting arenas	x			
Goals	x			
Leadership/steering			x	
Attitudes and trust			x	x
Geographical distance/the number of organizations involved	x	x	x	x
Outcome		x		

Table 3: Inter-organizational food safety crisis coordination in Norway.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed inter-organizational coordination in Norway. The findings show that inter-organizational horizontal coordination works fine between the three ministries. Although these ministries sometimes present different arguments, they usually find compromises and common solutions during their meetings. These frequent and regular meetings are used to overcome the inter-organizational coordination challenges. The findings also show that inter-organizational vertical coordination is stronger in relation to directorate issues than in relation to food inspections. The food safety agency has great

autonomy in conducting individual food inspections. The instrumental-hierarchical perspective and the institutional-cultural perspective appear to explain the main empirical findings relating to day-to-day coordination.

7 The case of New Zealand: key findings and discussion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the following three research questions. First, how have the food safety reforms implemented in New Zealand in 2002 and 2007 affected the vertical and horizontal inter-organizational structures and cultures, and then the coordination processes between the NZFSA, the MoH and the MAF? Second, what are the outcomes on coordination of these inter-organizational coordination processes in New Zealand? Third, how can the four theoretical perspectives explain the empirical findings?

7.2 The 2002 food safety reform

The New Zealand government focuses on food safety issues to ensure that consumers enjoy safe food, and that food exported to other countries satisfies strict requirements. Food safety crises can harm the national economy, as many businesses are dependent on exports. 'New Zealand exports more than 80 percent of the food it produces, providing just over half of the country's entire export earnings and contributing around 23 percent of gross domestic product' (NZFSA 2007c, p. 3). Maintaining such an extensive food export industry requires a good reputation in the environment as a safe food exporter, because consumers, both domestic and foreign, will be concerned about how safe food really is (Scott and McKenzie 2005; NZFSA 2007c).

Achieving food safety requires regulation and control. Accordingly, even though there is no best structure for organizing food safety issues, the formal organizational structure does matter. Organizational structures make a difference, because the structures focus attention in specific directions (Egeberg 2003). For example, the balance between health issues and agricultural issues depends on how such issues are structured (Rykkja 2008a).

Before 2002, the Food Safety Group in the MoH and the Food Assurance Authority in the MAF shared responsibility for food safety issues (Huseby *et al.* 2001, p. 32). ‘The Ministry of Health (MoH) administered the Food Act (covering food sold on the domestic market including imported food). The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) administered other food related legislation including the Animal Products Act, the Meat Act, the Dairy Industry Act and the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Act. MAF legislation was for the most part aimed at primary production, processing and exports’ (NZFSA 2007f).

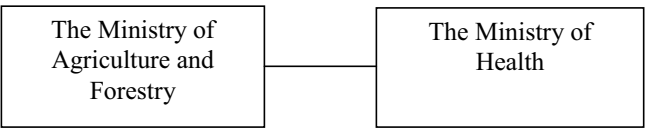


Figure 3: The inter-organizational structure of food safety issues in New Zealand before 2002

Having two ministries responsible for food safety issues caused many challenges, such as a lack of focus on consumers, duplication and inconsistencies, fragmented competence, and difficulties with inter-organizational coordination (NZFSA 2007d). New Zealand’s political and administrative leaders therefore decided to implement a new reform to reduce the gap between the actual and the desired effects.

The political and administrative leaders considered several structural options before implementing the 2002 food safety reform. The option that was considered first (and adopted) was to attach the NZFSA to the MAF – a popular strategy in many countries. Food safety and agricultural issues frequently require inter-organizational coordination processes, and linking these issues organizationally may well offer some advantages (Report 2006b). For example, a ministry of agriculture will frequently have much more capacity to deal with food safety issues than, for example, a ministry of health, since a ministry of health will also deal with issues such as hospitals.

However, making organizational ties too close can easily lead to problems, as business interests may come into conflict with food safety and consumer health. Administrators and politicians in various countries (including the UK), have debated how close or loose these ties should be (Asdal 2005; Rykkja 2008a; Rykkja 2008b).

The decision-makers considered a second option: attaching the NZFSA to the MoH. This organizational structure would ensure a greater focus on consumer health and a reduced focus on business interests. In most countries, the ministry of health bears responsibility for many important functions other than food safety (for example hospitals), and therefore has limited resources to dedicate to food safety. According to one interview respondent, although the New Zealand politicians concentrate on and debate health issues, they rarely debate the links between food safety and health. The political and administrative leaders also assessed various other structures, such as making the NZFSA a crown entity, establishing a ministry of food and biosecurity, setting up a superior ministry with subordinate agencies, and making the NZFSA an organizational unit within the MAF. New Zealand's political and administrative leaders therefore had to consider several options when implementing a new food safety reform. However, the relevant actors did not consider either of these options to be an appropriate solution, except for the first option (Report 2006b, p. 8).

Still, even when leaders have several alternatives to consider, identifying the alternative with the most positive effects will not be easy. Leaders always operate subject to ‘bounded rationality’, and therefore cannot calculate all of the possible effects of different organizational structures (March 1994). Further, New Zealand’s leaders had to take various considerations, such as cultural features, into account before implementing any new reform. For example, if a reform threatens the existing organizational culture, it will often be difficult to implement, due to cultural resistance. Therefore, cultural issues may play a significant role (Selznick 1957).

New Zealand’s political and administrative leaders established a food safety agency in 2002. It was attached to the MAF, as an SAB, representing a compromise between efficiency and clarity of responsibility (Report 2006b, p. 6).

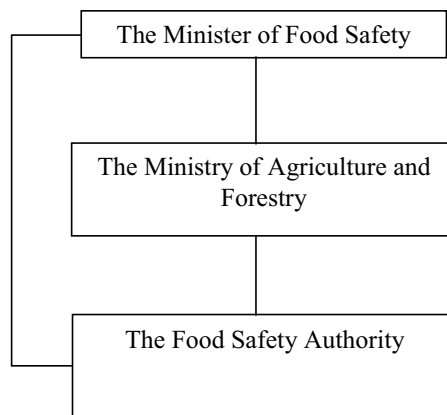


Figure 4: The inter-organizational structure of food safety issues in New Zealand between 2002 and 2007

The term SAB describes a permanent hierarchical affiliation between organizations at different levels. Between 2002 and 2007, the NZFSA operated under ‘delegated authority’, although the personnel, including the Executive Director, were formally employed by the MAF. The NZFSA and MAF therefore had a legal affiliation during that period (Report 2006b). By making the NZFSA an SAB, the politicians created a separate ministerial portfolio and a distinct food safety vote. An SAB requires a separate vote and the SAB chief executive reports directly to the ‘Vote Minister’ (Report 2006b, p. 9) (In New Zealand, a minister often holds several ministerial portfolios. For example, the Minister for Food Safety is currently also the Minister for Labour, as well as the Minister for Conservation and the Associate Minister for Immigration.)

Under this model, the Executive Director of the NZFSA could advise the Minister independently of the Director General of the MAF. The Director General could delegate performance, but not formal responsibility for such performance. The Public Finance Act 1989 and the State Sector Act 1988 constituted the legal framework that regulated the relationship between the NZFSA and the MAF. ‘The Responsible Minister is accountable to Parliament for the operations and the performance of the Ministry as a whole’ (Report 2006b, p. 10). ‘The *principle of ministerial rule* is central in many representative parliamentary democracies. This means that the individual cabinet minister is responsible for everything that happens in his or her subordinate organizations’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 153).

Making the NZFSA an SAB was cheaper than setting up an independent ministry (Report 2006b, p. 7). Further, creating a new ministry will always require more staff, and thus economic resources. Since most of the NZFSA staff came from the MAF, and not the MoH, it was less expensive ‘to transfer Health personnel to MAF rather than the other way around’ (Report 2006b, p. 8).

The political and administrative leaders wanted to ensure greater consistency in organizational design, increase the focus on consumers, reduce duplication, promote a risk-based decision-making system, and encourage greater application of WG (Food Focus 2001, p. 2). An advisory board was constituted and given a mandate to advise the minister on all issues concerning the NZFSA. Its members were drawn from various organizations outside the NZFSA (Food Focus 2003). The board was abolished after some time.

What were the actual effects of the 2002 food safety reform? The 2002 reform had the undesired effect of causing inter-organizational challenges between the NZFSA and the MAF. The relationship did not work efficiently enough, according to several interview respondents and an evaluation report (Report 2006b, p. 1). Why did the relationship fail to work efficiently? Both the report (2006b) and the interview respondents conclude that the actors in the SAB model had problems with accountability. Such accountability means that a position or an entity must report to a higher position or entity about actual performance and goal achievement (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 108). In the case of the reform, the ministry delegated tasks to the food safety agency, but could not delegate accountability for the same tasks due to legal restrictions. Therefore, of the factors presented in chapter two, the most significant and challenging was the division of labour (i.e. accountability) between the MAF and the NZFSA.

Why was this? A conflict arose when the minister wanted professional advice directly from the agency, but independently of the MAF, even though the agency was formally accountable to the MAF for providing that advice. Therefore, the food safety agency had to relate to both the Director General of the MAF and the Minister for Food Safety at the same time (Report 2006b, p. 11). The Minister for Food Safety could then end up in a situation where accountability could be challenged. Generally, an organizational form

of this type challenges the division of labour between the ministry and the food safety agency.

An example of a conflict between the MAF and the NZFSA was the geographical location of the NZFSA. The NZFSA and MAF disagreed about where the offices should be located, and the Minister for Food Safety had to become involved. 'Clearly there was a difference of view between MAF and NZFSA on this issue, but it is not the sort of issue that would normally be expected to be escalated to Minister level' (Report 2006b, p. 12). A further complication was that the Executive Director of the NZFSA had two masters: the Minister for Food Safety and the Director General of the MAF. The Director General could easily experience difficulties if the Executive Director gave the Minister advice that conflicted with his/her own.

Several interview respondents in this dissertation agreed that the SAB model had several confusing features. Such features may easily produce undesired effects. A further issue is that attaching the NZFSA to the MAF as an SAB could make it difficult for the NZFSA to ensure inter-organizational coordination with other agencies. Two arguments can be made in this respect. First, the NZFSA did not have sufficient formal autonomy. Second, the NZFSA did not operate at the same organizational level as other relevant ministries (Report 2006b, p. 12).

However, the authors of Report (2006b) argued for keeping the NZFSA as part of the MAF, because of 'the strong links that need to exist between the two' (Report 2006b, p. 1). The report presented two main arguments against separating the NZFSA from the MAF. First, a separation could increase inter-organizational fragmentation between the MAF and the NZFSA, and therefore reduce the scope for inter-organizational coordination. Second, a separation of the NZFSA from the MAF would increase economic costs, because some services would need to be duplicated. Nevertheless, a separation of the NZFSA from the

MAF would have made it easier to prevent agricultural considerations from influencing food safety issues and consumer considerations. A reform could therefore make food safety more independent of business interests. However, the NZFSA already had significant autonomy from agricultural interests, and gave advice directly to the Minister for Food Safety (Report 2006b, p. 6).

The establishment of the NZFSA also had some positive effects. Scott and McKenzie (2005, p. 15) conclude that the NZFSA was successful in achieving various official goals, and that it performed an important regulatory function. Moreover, international actors trusted the NZFSA, due to its regulatory expertise (Scott and McKenzie 2005, pp. 11, 15). Therefore, the reform brought positive effects.

7.3 The 2007 food safety reform

The government established a new ministry in 2007 by separating the NZFSA from the MAF. Creating a new ministry (a stand-alone public service department), means more horizontal inter-organizational specialization, and more vertical inter-organizational despecialization. The reasons for reform of the organization of food safety issues vary from country to country. In New Zealand, the main actors struggled with the effects of the 2002 reform, due to the challenging accountability framework of the SAB model. Later, unexpected effects of the 2002 reform turned into reasons for the 2007 reform. In contrast to food safety reforms in some other countries, such as in the UK in 2004 (Rykkja 2004), New Zealand's 2007 reform was not a consequence of a food safety crisis. It is therefore important to link causes with effects.

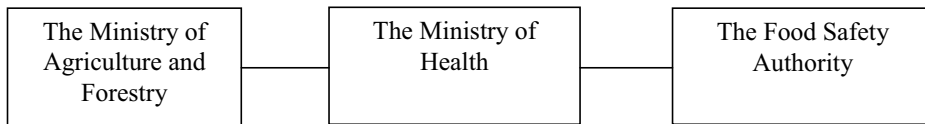


Figure 5: The inter-organizational structure of food safety issues in New Zealand after 2007

New Zealand has three levels of food safety regulation. The first (central) level is administered by the NZFSA. Even though the agency has become a ministry, it retained its name – the NZFSA. It employs 530 staff, spread over approximately 80 sites across New Zealand. The employees have differing educational backgrounds and work experience, and perform different functions (NZFSA 2008–2011). The second (regional) level is administered by 12 Public Health Units (which are linked to district health boards). The third (local) level is administered by 73 Territorial Authorities.

The Food Hygiene Regulations 1974 function under the Food Act 1981. ‘Under the Regulations, food sold in New Zealand has to be made in premises that are registered and inspected by local authority Environmental Health Officers (EHOs). There is a large area of potential overlap between the work of Food Act Officers and EHOs, usually decided by local arrangements. Food Act Officers are authorised to exercise all powers defined within the Food Act except those given to EHOs’ (NZFSA 2009, p. 13).

A Health Protection Officer at a District Health Board may act as a Food Act Officer, who may (NZFSA 2009, p. 13):

- ‘investigate food complaints’
- ‘provide general advice on food safety and suitability and the process for implementing a Food Safety Programme’
- ‘assess Food Safety Programme applications’

An EHO at a Territorial Authority performs tasks such as:

- 'investigate complaints regarding poor hygiene standards in premises registered under the Food Hygiene Regulations'
- 'register and inspect food businesses not operating an approved food safety programme'
- 'provide general food safety advice' (NZFSA 2009, p. 13).

The NZFSA is responsible for various pieces of legislation: the Food Act 1981, the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Act 1997, the Animal Products Act 1999, and the Wine Act 2003. The New Zealand government is currently working on a new and comprehensive Food Act, which will replace the Food Act 1981. In contrast to Norway's 2004 reform, neither of the two reforms (2002 and 2007) implemented in New Zealand included the introduction of a comprehensive Food Act. The new Food Act will make a positive difference, according to several interview respondents. 'The proposed new Food Act aims to improve New Zealand's ability to protect consumers'. The new Act will change the focus from an 'inspection-based system to a risk-based system'. Accordingly, businesses will bear greater responsibility than before for ensuring safe food (NZFSA 2008–2011, p. 11).

The NZFSA has sought to address several challenges through the 'Domestic Food Review' project, which has had the aim of modernizing New Zealand's food safety system, including the legislative framework (NZFSA 2007d, p. 4). The food safety system had to be improved to meet new and more challenging requirements. In the new system, food operators will be given three new tools to help them to manage food safety and suitability (and thus to satisfy their increased responsibility). Different food sectors may use different

tools, depending on, for example, the severity of the risks involved and the likely consequences of a food safety crisis. The first tool is a food control plan, which requires the food operator to implement risk management procedures. This may be used, by for example a restaurant, as the serving of unsafe food in a restaurant will endanger the health of consumers. The second tool is national programmes, i.e. sector- or industry-wide requirements. The third tool is food handler guidance, i.e. ‘educational information for people whose food activities provide a low risk and scope’, such as bed-and-breakfast businesses (NZFSA 2010a).

In 2005, two years before the implementation of the 2007 reform, the NZFSA changed its internal structure, switching from a sector-based approach to a functional approach:

“I believe that it is timely to evolve NZFSA in line with our risk management framework, with a key change being to move those parts of NZFSA that are vertically or sector based to a more horizontal or functional approach.”

(Andrew McKenzie, NZFSA 2005, p. 2)

The NZFSA will nevertheless need sector competence to ensure a close link between the food safety agency and the industry (NZFSA 2005). Altering an internal structure frequently affects intra-organizational coordination processes. In New Zealand, these processes involve the coordination of the activities of the various business groups within the food safety agency. Each business group is led by a director, while the NZFSA as whole is led by a chief executive.

The ‘*Communication and Infrastructure Group*’ focuses on communication, information and human resource management, seeking to ensure that the communication framework functions well. The ‘*Policy Group*’ plays a key role in international arenas, such as CODEX and is also involved in the implementation of legislation. The ‘*Joint Food*

Standards Group’ focuses on nutrition and labelling, and also works closely with the ‘Food Standards Australia New Zealand’ organization. The ‘*New Zealand Standards Group*’ concentrates on technical standards, processing, production, sale, and imports. The ‘Market Access Team’ within the ‘Export Standards Group’ negotiates with other countries in relation to the export of products from New Zealand (e.g. negotiating bilateral agreements).

The ‘*Compliance and Investigation Group*’ works on the implementation of standards, conducts investigations, and takes responsibility in potential emergency cases. The ‘*Agricultural and ACVM Group*’ concentrates on agricultural compounds and veterinary medicines, and standards related to these. The ‘*Finance Group*’ is responsible for the NZFSA’s finances (NZFSA 2007d).

The ‘*NZFSA Verification Agency*’, established in 1998, is responsible for issuing certificates to exporters of foodstuffs to other countries. It also coordinates the inspections conducted by veterinarians in connection with such certification. Historically, the agency ‘was the part of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry that was technically accountable to the New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA) to verify that meat, seafood and other animal products and by-products meet both the New Zealand standards and additional standards of importing countries’. The Verification Agency merged with the NZFSA in 2004, and is now one of the business groups. The Verification Agency employs approximately 280 persons, including 200 trained veterinarians (NZFSA 2007b). ‘VA is the delivery arm of the NZFSA and provides verification and certification services to approximately 700 food processing companies (e.g. meat, seafood and game); the majority of whose products are exported worldwide’ (NZFSA 2010b).

The NZFSA’s ‘*Science Group*’ also plays a significant role in science-based assessments, or ‘risk analyses’ (Slorach 2008, p. 26). ‘Risk analysis offers the opportunity to systematically and transparently collect and evaluate scientific information about hazards in

food and select the best options to manage any risks that may result' (NZFSA 2007c, p. 16). It may conclude contracts with external organizations if such contracts are necessary to obtain greater knowledge and information in challenging cases (Slorach 2008, p. 74). Several other organizations, such as the Institute of Environmental and Scientific Research, also provide scientific advice.

The '*NZFSA Academy*', established in 2005, gives expert advice to the NZFSA when the NZFSA lacks relevant expertise in a case. NZFSA staff may also seek external advice (Slorach 2008, p. 7). Further, the NZFSA sometimes appoints ad hoc expert groups, rather than permanent groups, in scientific issues.

In the context of food-safety risk analysis, most countries distinguish between risk assessment and risk management. Some countries, such as Norway, separate these functions entirely, and place them in different organizations. Although New Zealand distinguishes risk management from risk assessment, it combines the two functions *within* the NZFSA (but in different business groups). In practice, risk assessment needs to be coordinated with risk management, 'which appears to be the case at NZFSA' (Slorach 2008, p. 27). The NZFSA employs a risk-based framework that involves four steps. First, the NZFSA needs to identify potential risks. Second, the NZFSA needs to identify options and make decisions by inter-organizational coordination with other relevant organizations. Third, control measures need to be implemented. Fourth, the controls have to be monitored and reviewed (NZFSA 2007c, p. 16).

In addition to the NZFSA, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) plays a significant role in consumer protection by 'developing effective food standards for both New Zealand and Australia'. NZFSA does advice FSANZ in composing such food standards. 'In New Zealand, NZFSA enforces these standards the way the state and territory governments do in Australia' (New Zealand Food Regulatory Environment 2008).

In New Zealand, the separation of the NZFSA from the MAF has increased the cost of food safety to the state, in the form of both establishment costs and the costs of employing new permanent staff. However, some cost reductions have been achieved by making the NZFSA and the MAF share various services, such as IT functions and contract management. Several interview respondents highlighted the advantages of this solution.

Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004) argue that political and administrative leaders need to deal with ‘two particularly large and pressing problems’. First, they need to reduce costs. Second, they need to ensure legitimacy. The leaders need to take these problems into account in decision-making (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004, p. 184). Both costs and legitimacy may be relevant for food safety issues.

However, ensuring cost efficiency and simultaneously increasing legitimacy will always be a great challenge. Such legitimacy in the environment will always be important, and securing this kind of legitimacy often requires economic resources. New Zealand’s political and administrative leaders have argued that legitimacy is a major reason for reform, even though costs have increased: ‘NZFSA has evolved to become a highly reputable agency with a strong brand. It no longer needs to be attached to MAF to ensure its credibility in international trade. Being a separate department will enable NZFSA to focus more on its core functions’ (NZFSA 2007e, p. 2).

7.4 Effects on inter-organizational coordination

Chapter two demonstrated that several factors may either prevent or promote inter-organizational coordination between organizations. Using these factors as evaluation criteria provides important insights into how inter-organizational processes operate in New Zealand

after the reform in 2007. What are the effects of this reform on inter-organizational coordination processes and outcomes?

The first factor that promotes inter-organizational coordination is a clear division of labour. Such a clear division of labour between ministries, and between ministries and subordinate agencies, may theoretically promote inter-organizational coordination. A clear division of labour is necessary for efficient resource use, and for avoiding overlaps between ministries. Further, such a division makes it easier to ensure that a clear accountability framework for the tasks in question is in place. The separation has eliminated the confusing SAB model, which featured unclear division of labour. An unclear division of labour may prevent inter-organizational coordination, and should therefore be clarified.

The new reform produced stronger coordination by ensuring a clearer division of labour between the MAF and the NZFSA. This clearer division promoted accountability for food safety issues. An unclear division of labour, as New Zealand experienced between 2002 and 2007, increases the chances of overlaps and grey zones, which make coordination difficult (Peters 1998; Bakvis and Juillet 2004). There is a quite clear division of labour between the NZFSA and the MAF in relation to both domestic and international issues. In future, it will be important for New Zealand to ensure that national and international issues are dealt with consistently. Agricultural and food safety issues require inter-organizational coordination processes in New Zealand, because the country exports much of the food it produces to other countries (NZFSA 2007a; NZFSA 2007b; NZFSA 2007c).

In addition, the division of labour between the NZFSA and the MoH is pretty clear. A paper (“Memorandum of Understanding”) describes the division of labour between the two ministries. However, some uncertainty exists between the two ministries: ‘The role of NZFSA in the nutrition area and in the promotion of health by providing advice on healthy diets seems unclear to many outside NZFSA and the Ministry of Health (MoH)’ (Slorach

2008, p. 7). This difference makes it important to distinguish between food safety and nutrition, because there is variation between these fields as regards the degree of inter-organizational coordination.

The second factor that promotes inter-organizational coordination is meeting arenas for coordination. The creation of arenas enables civil servants to establish decision-making rules, share information, discuss policy and make decisions. Where such meeting arenas do not exist, inter-organizational coordination may be prevented (Jacobsen 1993). The NZFSA participates in meetings with the other ministries to achieve inter-organizational coordination. The MAF and the NZFSA are both involved in inter-organizational coordination processes, because their respective policy fields are very tightly connected. One interview respondent compared the inter-organizational coordination processes in this policy field with processes in other policy fields, and described the outcome of such processes:

“I think that it is as good as any government agency could have in terms of understanding each other’s work programs.”

(Director Carol Barnao, NZFSA)

Why are such inter-organizational coordination processes necessary? One reason is that tight connections between policy fields, such as food safety, agriculture and biosecurity, increase the need for inter-organizational coordination. Legislation is a further important reason:

“Part of the need for coordination is that they [the MAF] have some obligation under some of our pieces of legislation.”

(Director Carol Barnao, NZFSA)

The ministries need to participate in meeting arenas to ensure strong coordination, even though the NZFSA is separated from the MAF:

“There is a strong linkage between the two, because historically we used to be one.”

(Director Carol Barnao, NZFSA)

Interview respondents viewed information-sharing as an important strategy for ensuring inter-organizational coordination. Such information-sharing makes inter-organizational coordination processes more efficient, and contributes to WG, which is seen as very important in New Zealand:

“Both agencies share documents/papers/briefs. This strengthens the representation of the other by providing broader perspectives on issues. NZ [New Zealand] is very focused on ‘whole-of-government’ positions, so there is a lot of sharing and coming together on positions.”

(Director Carole Inkster, NZFSA)

However, inter-organizational coordination is challenging, and one interview respondent described the situation as follows:

“It is quite good, although I would like it to be a bit better. But this has always been a problem anyway.”

(Chief Executive Andrew McKenzie, NZFSA)

The interview respondent explained that coordination works fairly well, but also stated that it could be improved. Further, the interview respondent highlighted that inter-organizational coordination processes always becomes challenging for participants, because it requires much time and energy.

However, one interview respondent argues that the separation of the NZFSA from the MAF has reduced the level of tensions, and the linkages are now clarified:

“The separate department model [elimination of the SAB] has addressed such tensions.”

(Director Carole Inkster, NZFSA)

Ensuring inter-organizational coordination frequently requires formal meeting arenas. However, such formal arenas will often be insufficient for the purpose. Therefore, informal arenas may be needed to supplement the formal ones. Several interview respondents described a combination of formal and informal inter-organizational meeting arenas between the NZFSA and the MAF, for example:

“Where there are differences of view, they are often resolved in an informal setting, and, where necessary, the resolution may be reported back and formally recorded in a more formal setting.”

(Manager Derek Belton, MAF BNZ)

Focusing on informal inter-organizational meeting arenas in addition to formal ones is often advantageous. However, are such informal inter-organizational meeting arenas compatible with formal meetings?

“From time to time there are different points of view that need to be resolved, but it's not a matter of the informal meetings being in conflict with the formal [meetings].”

(Manager Derek Belton, MAF BNZ)

Even though the nature of the meetings between the NZFSA and MAF has changed from vertical to horizontal, the interview respondents concluded that the reform has *not* affected either the frequency or the formalization of the meetings between the ministries:

“Communication and collaboration with MAF has [...] not changed [...] or increased.”

(Director Carole Inkster, NZFSA)

The interview respondents, with one exception, also reported that the 2007 reform – the separation of the food safety agency from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry – have

not altered the frequency or form of contact between the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the food safety agency. Even though horizontal inter-organizational coordination processes have replaced vertical inter-organizational coordination processes, the meetings largely operate as before:

“We [NZFSA] have also continued quarterly meetings between NZFSA and MAF Biosecurity New Zealand directors, which provides the opportunity for the whole teams to come together to discuss import/export issues. Other Groups meet on a needs basis - we have an SPS Group that meets monthly and our chief negotiator for market access works in MAF Biosecurity for one day a week to keep imports and exports ‘joined up’.”

(Director Carole Inkster, NZFSA)

Civil servants from the NZFSA are in contact with civil servants from the MAF almost every day in the form of e-mails, telephone calls or face-to-face meetings, to discuss food safety issues and solve concrete problems, according to another interview respondent. Why? Should the change from vertical to horizontal inter-organizational coordination processes *not* lead to practical changes? First, the NZFSA and the MAF still need inter-organizational coordination processes, and such coordination processes require meeting arenas. Second, as an SAB, the NZFSA already enjoyed great autonomy from the MAF, in that it gave advice directly to the Minister for Food Safety. Thus, in practice, the separation may not have involved such great changes as might first be expected. Nevertheless, becoming a ministry should give the organization members a feeling of greater independence in decision-making.

The ministries have to participate in inter-organizational meeting arenas, such as in relation to SPS (sanitary and phytosanitary) issues. An SPS agreement has been established to ensure the protection of human, animal and plant health within the member states (Veggeland 2004, p. 110). The SPS Forum and the SPS Coordination Group are two important meeting arenas to deal with such SPS issues. ‘Both the SPS Forum and the SPS

Coordination Group provide a formal and regular mechanism for SPS-related information sharing and consultation to take place so that robust SPS policy options have developed' (Martin' Jenkins 2007, p. 5).

The SPS Forum consists of the chief executives of the NZFSA, the MFAT, the MAF Biosecurity department and the MAF Policy department. Participants in the forum make decisions and share information (Martin' Jenkins 2007). The SPS Coordination Group consists of senior managers from the same four organizations. 'The forum focuses on high level policy and strategy to achieve a whole of government perspective on SPS trade issues' (Martin' Jenkins 2007, p. 5). The SPS Coordination Group submits information and strategies to the SPS Forum.

Several interview respondents indicated that formal and informal inter-organizational coordination meeting arenas are compatible. Such informal meetings play a significant supplementary role in relation to the formal meetings. If the formal and informal meeting arenas were incompatible, for example if the actors in these arenas made conflicting decisions, disagreements would quickly develop (it is worth noting that conflicts may arise even when formal and informal meetings are compatible.)

Some respondents reported that challenges exist in the inter-organizational meeting arenas due to the organizations having different focuses. However, according to the interview respondents, the reason was not the link between formal and informal meetings. The respondent interviews indicate that, even though there are cultural differences between the ministries, the ministries pull in the same direction, and use both formal and informal meetings to ensure inter-organizational coordination. Cultural differences do not hinder inter-organizational coordination. However, such cultural differences could have challenged inter-organizational coordination, as it can be both frustrating and time-consuming when staff are used to different working procedures and coordination methods.

Still, some interview respondents argue that cultural issues may be more challenging in having the NZFSA as a ministry, because it still requires coordination between the NZFSA and the MAF. When challenging cases arise, issues may be difficult to resolve if they require inter-organizational coordination of organizations with different cultures. For the actors, such cultural differences play a significant role between the MAF and the NZFSA, although they are not easy to identify explicitly:

“There are cultural differences, but I’m not sure I can articulate those accurately. NZFSA is smaller and more nimble and has a ‘can do’ attitude. MAF is larger and this alone makes for a different culture.”

(Director Carole Inkster, NZFSA)

Another highly relevant actor stated the following:

“Different departments [or Ministries] tend to have different cultures, and at times these can lead to quite different perspectives being taken on issues.”

(Chief Executive Andrew McKenzie, NZFSA)

Several interview respondents argued that pragmatic solutions are always important for organizations such as the NZFSA, and that a positive culture promotes the finding of such solutions:

“We [NZFSA] are bureaucrats, but our aim is to be less bureaucratic.”

(Executive Director (now Chief Executive), Andrew McKenzie, NZFSA, 2007d, p. 7)

This interview respondent stated that other ministries are more bureaucratic than the NZFSA, and that this can be a challenge in inter-organizational coordination processes. The presence of extensive bureaucratic procedures often makes processes more time-consuming and decision-making less flexible.

In addition, one interview respondent argued that the inter-organizational processes between the MAF and the NZFSA would become more difficult to maintain in the future, because the NZFSA is not formally attached to the MAF, and common ‘institutional knowledge’ in the two ministries will therefore be reduced over time. The inter-organizational coordination processes could then easily become more impersonal and more difficult to monitor. The consultant company Martin’ Jenkins (2007, p. 6) has suggested that ‘considerably more will need to be done to build a culture of cooperation between NZFSA and MAF at all levels’. Such a culture can be even more difficult to promote after a separation.

How coordination between the two ministries actually works, depends on which MAF departments that participate in the inter-organizational coordination arenas. It is often more difficult to ensure the efficient working of the meeting arenas involving the NZFSA and the MAF BNZ than the efficient working of the meeting arenas involving the NZFSA and the MAF Policy. Why is this? The NZFSA focuses on export to other countries, while MAF BNZ focuses on imports and threats that may cause problems within New Zealand’s borders. The country needs a consistent system for imports and exports to ensure credibility, and such consistency requires inter-organizational coordination. ‘The credibility of NZ’s regulatory regime depends on being able to demonstrate that the standards applied to domestic food production are no less stringent than those applying to imported food’ (Report 2006b, p. 16).

According to the Chief Executive, Andrew McKenzie, one of the NZFSA directors had an explicit coordination role, spending between 20 and 40 percent of his time in the department handling biosecurity issues, to ensure inter-organizational coordination between the NZFSA and the MAF BNZ. Transferring staff from one organization to another on a part-time basis can be an efficient strategy for ensuring inter-organizational coordination.

This step by the NZFSA ensures that the two ministries will be more attentive to each other's views. In addition, the NZFSA and the MAF also share several services to reduce costs. Sharing services can be a way for small organizations to make financial savings. Sharing also makes it easier to ensure inter-organizational coordination of other issues, because the ministries already have a common platform.

How did the 2007 reform affect inter-organizational coordination processes between the NZFSA and the MoH? The 2007 reform did not affect the inter-organizational coordination between the NZFSA and the MoH, because the MoH was not involved in the reform (by contrast to the 2002 reform). It is nevertheless important to discuss inter-organizational coordination processes between the NZFSA and the MoH, since the link between food safety issues and health issues has been very important in various countries. Moreover, prior to the establishment of the NZFSA in 2002 the MoH handled several food safety issues. The NZFSA currently holds meetings with the MoH, but these do not take place as regularly as the meetings between the NZFSA and the MAF. One interview respondent described the situation as follows:

“We [NZFSA and MoH] do not really have formal schedule meetings. They tend to be ad hoc, but not irregular.”

(Director Mark Jacobs, MoH)

Note that this situation, as described by Mr Jacobs, has changed in the year since the interview (from 2008 to 2010). According to a follow-up interview, the meetings have become more regular. Moreover, the meetings are guided by a ‘Memorandum of Understanding’. The memorandum envisages annual plans, progress reports, and annual reviews, and that two supervising executives will ensure information-sharing between the Chief Executive of the NZFSA and the Director General of the MoH.

The third factor that promotes inter-organizational coordination is common goals. Significantly conflicting and diverging goals can hinder coordination (Alexander 1995; State Services Commission 2008). In September 2008, an independent food safety expert advised the NZFSA to amend its mandate (Slorach 2008). ‘The mandate areas were that NZFSA protects and promotes the health and safety of consumers and facilitates and enhances New Zealand’s trade in food and food-related products’ (NZFSA 2007–2008, p. 2). The NZFSA had adopted an important but very challenging mandate by combining food safety and facilitating market access. Slorach (2008, p. 35) argues that the mandate signals that promoting food safety and facilitating market access have the same value, and that the NZFSA pays equal attention to these two considerations. Paying equal attention to them could have a negative impact on food safety.

However, Slorach also argues that facilitating market access does not actually challenge food safety in the case of New Zealand. In practice, the NZFSA pays more attention to food safety, even though market access is seen as important. However, consumers and external observers could be confused by the original mandate. The NZFSA therefore changed its mandate, stating clearly that it focuses on food safety. The new mandate aims ‘to protect consumers by providing an effective food regulatory programme covering food produced and consumed in New Zealand as well as imports and exports of food products’ (NZFSA 2007–2008, p. 62).

Contrasting the goals of the organizations involved in inter-organizational coordination makes it possible to observe similarities and differences in their focuses. MAF BNZ pursues three outcomes. First, it works to prevent ‘harmful organisms from crossing New Zealand’s borders’, while ensuring trade and tourism are maintained’. Second, it works to decrease ‘the unwanted harm caused by organisms already established in New Zealand’. Third, it works to enable ‘New Zealanders to be informed and involved participants in the

biosecurity system' (MAF BNZ 2008). MAF BNZ therefore focuses on disease management.

Both the NZFSA and MAF BNZ are responsible for more technical tasks than MAF Policy, which pursues the following outcomes. First, it works to ensure 'economic performance' and add value to 'New Zealand's per capita income growth'. Second, it works to increase the 'environmental performance of the agriculture, food and forestry sectors by encouraging their sustainable use of the biophysical resources on which they are based'. Third, the first two outcomes are to 'create social and cultural benefits' and 'minimise damaging trade-offs' (MAF Policy 2010).

Food safety and consumer health are two fields that need to be considered together. The MoH focuses primarily on the latter. First, it works to improve the health of New Zealand's citizens. Second, it works to reduce inequalities between citizens. Third, it works to improve the participation and independence of people living with disabilities. Fourth, it works to increase trust and security.

According to one interview respondent, the separation of the NZFSA from the MAF created the impression that New Zealand was paying more attention to consumer health, and less attention to business interests, than before. A separation could therefore be advantageous:

"It gave us [NZFSA] the ability to strengthen the recognition of our [NZFSA] accountabilities, which are to the New Zealand consumers."

(Director Carol Barnao, NZFSA)

Although there is *not* a big debate in New Zealand regarding food safety issues and their organization, political and administrative leaders regard food safety as important, because a food safety crisis could harm food exports. Several interview respondents pointed out that the Green Party in particular focuses on such food safety issues. In addition, making the

NZFSA a ministry at the same hierarchical level as the MAF put food safety and agriculture on an equal footing as regards their priority on the political-administrative agenda. The reform lifted food safety to a higher political-administrative level than before. Giving these policy fields the same priority level increases the chances of WG, because ministry status should in theory ensure that politicians pay equal attention to them. As a ministry, the NZFSA could sit at ‘discussion tables’ as a full participant (Food Focus 2007b, p. 1).

Another interview respondent from the MoH identified some tensions between these objectives and those of the NZFSA:

“Explicitly our [MoH] whole reason for being an organization is to protect and promote health for New Zealanders. NZFSA has more of a split reason for being. One is consistent with ours [MoH], and the other is promoting and supporting New Zealand food industry. And I think that creates some tension for them [NZFSA] reconciling those different roles.”

(Director Mark Jacobs, MoH)

The ministries have different focuses, which can affect inter-organizational coordination. Ansell and Vogel (2006) argue that food safety issues are ‘contested’ in several countries due to diverging focuses. Food safety generates conflicts about who should participate in decision-making, and what kinds of procedures should regulate such decision-making. Ministries will always pursue different interests. However, frequent interaction between them may ensure inter-organizational coordination, and reduce the chances of ‘contested governance’.

The fourth factor that promotes inter-organizational coordination is active leadership. A lack of active leadership and/or a lead organization may prevent inter-organizational coordination (Alexander 1995).

“The chair rotates between NZFSA and MAF BNZ (between the Chief Executive, NZFSA, and the Deputy Director General, MAF BNZ).”

(Director Carole Inkster, NZFSA)

The NZFSA has a leading role in the official committee on food safety, which also comprises the MoH, the MAF, the MFAT, the Ministry of Economic Development, the Treasury, the Department of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, and the Ministry of Consumer Affairs (NZFSA 2007b). This committee primarily shares information, but occasionally also makes decisions.

Meetings take place between the ministries at many levels every day, and such meetings require active leadership. The interview respondents argued that the separation of the NZFSA from the MAF has provided such clarity, and thus made active and formalized leadership easier to achieve. Further, when several ministries have formal professional and political responsibility for an entity (e.g. a food safety agency), the need to establish a lead body increases. In Norway, for example, three ministries are responsible for the food safety agency. In New Zealand, by contrast, the need to establish a lead body fell away once the NZFSA was given independent responsibility for food safety issues.

The fifth factor that promotes inter-organizational coordination is positive attitudes. In contrast, negative attitudes can prevent inter-organizational coordination (Whetten 1982). Several interview respondents expressed positive attitudes towards both the 2007 reform and the inter-organizational coordination processes, because the 2002 reform was not sufficiently effective. One interview respondent describes the degree of trust between the NZFSA and MAF BNZ:

“[Trust is] high, because we have ongoing/regular discussions/contact at the officer to officer level. There are rarely surprises at the senior level.”

(Director Carole Inkster, NZFSA)

However, several interview respondents were concerned about how these inter-organizational processes will work in the future, given that the NZFSA is no longer attached to the MAF. As part of building a culture that promotes positive attitudes towards inter-organizational coordination, the Chief Executive of the NZFSA gives a PowerPoint presentation to new employees to boost awareness of the challenges connected to inter-organizational and intra-organizational coordination. Moreover, positive attitudes are frequently linked to mutual trust. Positive attitudes towards inter-organizational coordination are likely to increase the degree of mutual trust. Even though the MAF and the NZFSA have experienced some inter-organizational coordination challenges, it seems that they trust each other.

The sixth factor that promotes inter-organizational coordination is a combination of short geographical distances/shared IT systems and the number of organizations involved in inter-organizational coordination. Long geographical distances and/or a lack of shared IT systems can hinder inter-organizational coordination. Face-to-face contact will frequently be important for the efficient working of inter-organizational meetings (Egeberg 2003). In New Zealand, the fact that the MAF, the NZFSA and the MoH are located within walking distance of each other makes it easy for the staff of these three ministries to meet face-to-face.

Further, the number of organizations involved in inter-organizational coordination processes also plays a significant role. Inter-organizational coordination processes will frequently be stronger when the number of organizations involved remains low. In contrast, involving a large number of organizations in inter-organizational coordination raises

transaction costs, and thus makes coordination more challenging. In New Zealand, food safety issues most frequently require inter-organizational coordination between the NZFSA and the two departments of the MAF, and therefore the number of organizations involved in inter-organizational coordination processes is usually quite low. The MoH does not participate as frequently as the MAF in inter-organizational coordination processes of food safety issues.

The seventh factor is the outcome. The interview respondents reported that inter-organizational coordination is fairly strong.

7.5 Discussion of findings

The instrumental-hierarchical perspective suggests that political and administrative leaders implement reforms to achieve desired outcomes, such as greater inter-organizational coordination. ‘Although the formal organizational structure does not necessarily indicate anything about actual behaviour of members in an organization, it will constrain how tasks are carried out’ (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 27). Accordingly, administrative and political leaders need to take such issues into account when implementing reforms.

Countries may implement reforms for various reasons (See chapter one for a complete discussion). First, a crisis may reveal weaknesses in the organizational structures selected to resolve food safety issues. A reform can therefore solve capacity problems. Second, political and administrative leaders occasionally implement reforms to reduce the risk of a crisis arising, increase problem-handling capacity or reduce weaknesses. New Zealand provides an example of the latter reason. In the terminology of the instrumental-hierarchical perspective, planning for the future will often be a rational risk-reduction

strategy. How do the horizontal inter-organizational coordination processes actually work in New Zealand, and how can the theoretical perspectives explain the findings?

The *first factor* discussed was how clear the division of labour between the ministries really is. The instrumental-hierarchical perspective explains the empirical finding relating to this factor, while the other three perspectives do not. The divisions of labour between the NZFSA and the two departments of the MAF, and between the NZFSA and the MoH, are fairly clear. The division of labour is *not* subject to continuous negotiation, contrary to the prediction of the instrumental-negotiation perspective. However, some tensions have arisen between the NZFSA and the MoH in relation to nutrition issues, a fact that supports the instrumental-negotiation perspective. In addition, the MAF and the NZFSA have faced some challenges due to a NZFSA director spending large amounts of time in the MAF, seeking to build a better inter-organizational framework. The empirical findings also do not support the institutional-cultural perspective or the institutional-myth perspective, as internal and/or external pressure does not seem to affect the actual division of labour between the ministries.

The *second factor* was arenas for inter-organizational coordination between the ministries. The ministries have both formal and informal arenas for ensuring inter-organizational horizontal coordination, but these are used more frequently by the two departments of the MAF and the NZFSA, than by the NZFSA and the MoH. The interview respondents reported both formal and informal meetings between the NZFSA and the MAF. Cases are often resolved informally (and formally later on, if necessary). These findings support the predictions of the instrumental-hierarchical perspective as well as the institutional-cultural perspective, as the NZFSA and the MAF have established meeting arenas for the purpose of ensuring inter-organizational coordination. Even though horizontal inter-organizational coordination arenas have replaced vertical inter-organizational coordination arenas, the processes largely operate as before. The two ministries still need to

ensure inter-organizational coordination. In addition, the empirical findings relating to the meeting arenas are explained by the institutional-cultural perspective, under which formal and informal inter-organizational meetings are compatible.

In contrast, although the institutional-myth perspective predicts that political and administrative leaders will establish inter-organizational meeting arenas, it also states that these will be either rejected or decoupled. This theoretical perspective does not appear to explain the empirical findings relating to the ministry-level inter-organizational coordination meeting arenas. None of the empirical findings provide evidence of the expected decoupling of formal and informal inter-organizational coordination arenas. Nor do the empirical findings support the prediction that inter-organizational coordination meeting arenas will be rejected.

The *third factor* was goals/outcomes – how clear they were, how formal they were, and to what extent they conflicted with each other. Significantly unclear, conflicting or diverging outcomes can hinder inter-organizational coordination (Alexander 1995; State Services Commission 2008). According to the empirical findings, the outcomes are formalized. These outcomes guide actual behaviour, a fact that can be explained by the two instrumental perspectives – the instrumental-hierarchical perspective and the instrumental-negotiation perspective. The empirical findings do not support the existence of informal outcomes, and therefore do not provide support for the two institutional perspectives – the institutional-cultural perspective and the institutional-myth perspective.

Do the outcomes conflict with each other? In September 2008, an independent food safety expert advised the NZFSA to amend its mandate, because the outcomes could come into conflict. The NZFSA had adopted an important, but very challenging, mandate by combining food safety and the facilitation of market access. However, Slorach revealed that, in practice, the NZFSA paid more attention to food safety than to facilitating market access.

The alteration of the mandate made the outcomes clearer for consumers. The instrumental-negotiation perspective can explain the situation before the alteration of the mandate, but cannot explain the situation after the alteration.

The NZFSA and the department of the MAF dealing with biosecurity issues (MAF BNZ) have experienced conflicts. For this reason, it is important to distinguish between outcomes that one organization produces, and outcomes produced collectively by several organizations. The instrumental-negotiation perspective explains some of the findings regarding conflicts between the NZFSA and MAF BNZ. For example, while the NZFSA needs to balance import and export requirements, MAF BNZ pays less attention to exports than to imports. However, the fact that a director of the NZFSA spends a significant amount of time in MAF BNZ may decrease the explanatory power of the instrumental-negotiation perspective, because such a presence may reduce conflicts. The empirical material does not indicate any informal goals or outcomes. Therefore, the institutional-cultural perspective and the institutional-myth perspective do not explain the empirical findings relating to this factor.

The *fourth factor* is leadership/steering. The interview respondents reported that both formal and informal leadership are important in the ministries' meeting arenas. Therefore, the empirical findings support both the instrumental-hierarchical perspective and the institutional-cultural perspective. The instrumental perspectives focus more on steering, while the institutional perspectives focus more on leadership. Distinguishing clearly between the two instrumental perspectives (the instrumental-hierarchical perspective and the instrumental-negotiation perspective), is not easy. The same can be said of the two institutional perspectives (the institutional-cultural perspective and the institutional-myth perspective). It is therefore appropriate to distinguish simply between an instrumental and an institutional perspective in relation to leadership/steering. The instrumental perspective suggests that formal steering plays a significant role, because if disagreements arise between

the three ministries at the lowest hierarchical level, the case will be referred up to the next hierarchical level.

The *fifth factor* has two components: attitudes and trust. The researcher in this dissertation expected attitudes (positive versus negative), towards inter-organizational coordination and the degree of trust (low, medium, high), between the actors to play a significant part in inter-organizational coordination processes. The two institutional perspectives focus more on trust and attitudes than the two instrumental perspectives. It is extremely difficult to differentiate between the theoretical perspectives when explaining these components. The empirical findings show that the actors have a positive attitude towards inter-organizational coordination, and that they trust each other. Positive personal chemistry between participants in inter-organizational coordination meetings always plays a significant role. Nevertheless, handling inter-organizational coordination will always be challenging in difficult cases.

The *sixth factor* also has two components: the geographical distance and the number of organizations involved. The geographical distance between the ministries is small, and all of the offices are located within walking distance of each other. Therefore, the distance does not play a significant part. The NZFSA is a ministry, and not an agency attached to several ministries (as in the case of Norway). Therefore, the number of ministries formally involved in food safety is much lower in New Zealand than in Norway.

The *seventh factor* is the outcome on coordination of inter-organizational coordination processes. The interview respondents argued that coordination works fairly well between the ministries in New Zealand. In general, the New Zealand state sector focuses on inter-organizational coordination, because the implementation of NPM in the 1980s caused inter-organizational fragmentation in several policy fields (Boston and Eichbaum 2005; Chapman and Duncan 2007; State Services Commission 2008).

What kinds of links exist between inter-organizational coordination and WG? New Zealand focuses on WG, and so analyzing whether the organization of inter-organizational coordination can be seen as WG will provide important insights. The WG perspective encompasses various strategies, such as structural changes and the establishment of teams and networks, but was not designed to replace NPM. Rather, it was supposed to focus attention on inter-organizational coordination in order to reduce fragmentation. The introduction of WG means greater complexity, since NPM and WG features will frequently coexist (Christensen and Lægreid 2007a).

Does the food safety reform in 2007 represent a WG strategy aimed at ensuring greater inter-organizational coordination? WG is a difficult analytical concept, as it has a broad framework for action, and may therefore encompass various structural solutions and strategies. New Zealand has adopted a WG perspective in relation to food safety issues. 'Food and food safety contribute to wider Government objectives and are not outcomes themselves' (NZFSA 2007c, p. 20). The government's intention is for safe food to support consumer health and market access for food produced in New Zealand (although consumer health is regarded as more important than the national economy).

The attachment of the NZFSA to the MAF between 2002 and 2007 can be interpreted as a WG strategy, because vertical inter-organizational coordination processes involving the two organizations took place. Vertical inter-organizational coordination processes frequently demand less time, resources and energy than horizontal inter-organizational coordination processes (Egeberg 2003). Horizontal inter-organizational coordination is less dependent on rules and procedures, such as instructions, and may therefore be harder to implement than vertical inter-organizational coordination.

Why is this? Ensuring control over the implementation of decisions frequently demands formal and hierarchical leadership, and thus achieving such control will often be

easier in a hierarchy of organizations than in a horizontal network of organizations. Accordingly, coordinating food safety and agricultural issues within an SAB framework could be a stronger WG strategy than separating the NZFSA from the MAF. The instrumental-hierarchical perspective suggests that separation increases the chances of inter-organizational fragmentation. In the case of New Zealand, fragmentation may arise because the NZFSA as a ministry is not formally accountable to the MAF. Such accountability was previously ensured by the SAB framework.

The separation of the NZFSA from the MAF can also be interpreted as a WG strategy. Two arguments can be made in this respect. First, since WG is more preoccupied with horizontal than vertical inter-organizational coordination, the 2007 reform fits the WG perspective more closely than does the 2002 reform. Second – applying instrumental-hierarchical terminology – the SAB model was complicated and had an unclear responsibility framework. It challenged inter-organizational coordination, and led to tensions between the NZFSA and the MAF. A lack of focus on inter-organizational coordination, contrasts the WG-strategy.

Factors	The instrumental-hierarchical perspective	The instrumental-negotiation perspective	The institutional-cultural perspective	The institutional-myth perspective
Division of labour	x	(x)		
Meeting arenas	x			
Goals	x	(x)		
Leadership/steering	x		x	
Attitudes and trust			x	x

Geographical distance/the number of Organizations involved	x	x	x	x
Outcome	x	(x)		

Table 4: Inter-organizational coordination in day-to-day food safety issues in New Zealand.

7.6 Food safety crises and Operation Waiheke

Compared with other countries, New Zealand has rarely experienced food safety crises that threatened consumer health. Nevertheless, it faces the problem of a high incidence of bacterial diseases, such as campylobacteriosis, which cost the country approximately five million working days a year (Food Focus 2007b; NZFSA 2007c; NZFSA 2007–2008).

All countries need to have organizational capacity to deal with food safety issues. Moreover, organizations that work with food safety issues need to be prepared for potential crises. In the case of New Zealand, its geographical location – ‘on major fault line’ – and its ‘dependence on agriculture make it vulnerable to natural and biosecurity threats’ (Enderwick 2006, p. 70). Enderwick also points out, however, that this situation has stimulated the development of systems for dealing with potential threats.

In 2005, the NZFSA, the MAF Policy and the MAF BNZ organized a joint training exercise to prepare for a potential crisis. ‘It provided an opportunity to improve coordination across government for dealing with emergency exotic animal disease outbreaks, and to test the Government’s Beehive facilities’ (MAF 2006, p. 10). *Operation Taurus* comprised two separate scenarios. The first covered regional field training in Manawatu. The second covered the operation of the National Response Centre (NRC). The NRC is responsible for inter-organizational coordination in crisis situations, both internally between state-sector

organizations and externally between state-sector organizations and local government. It is also responsible for media contact and international contacts and negotiations. The training exercise led to the development of an emergency manual ‘that contains checklists, process flow charts, job cards, work streams, accountabilities and “how to” guides’ (Food Focus 2007a, p. 19).

A short time after Operation Taurus was completed New Zealand faced a potential threat, when the Prime Minister received a letter stating that Waiheke Island had been infected by foot and mouth disease (FMD). ‘FMD is a highly contagious viral disease that affects cattle, sheep, goats, deer, llamas and pigs’ (Food Focus 2005, p. 21). The fact that FMD has an incubation period of 14 days makes it difficult to handle, and means that any threat must be treated as a real situation. The likelihood of an FMD incident is fairly low, but the consequences can be severe (MAF 2006, p. 30). In the UK, an FMD outbreak in the 1990s resulted in a crisis that challenged the existing organizational food safety structures, and ultimately triggered reform (Rykkja 2008a).

New Zealand treated the letter as describing a real threat until it was confirmed that it was a hoax. An outbreak of this kind would have been catastrophic for New Zealand’s exports to other countries, and would probably have affected export revenues for a significant period subsequently. The efforts were not wasted: ‘A response to a hoax can, however, provide an experimental learning opportunity for an organization. In a hoax response, organizations respond as if a real threat is present, testing the organizations’ risk and crisis preparedness’ (Vidoloff 2009, p. 91). Further, the Police became involved, investigating the hoax letter as a potential crime.

Initially, the Official Committee for Domestic and External Security Coordination played a significant role. ‘In the event of a crisis or emergency affecting New Zealand’s interests, a watch group is formed of senior officials from appropriate departments to

monitor and advise the government on the situation' (Domestic and External Security Group 2009). More than 100 staff from the NZFSA, the MAF Policy and MAF BNZ was mobilized to deal with the potential crisis and ensure inter-organizational coordination (Food Focus 2007a, pp. 18–19). The organizations' investigations did not reveal any signs of FMD and, after some time, the media received a second letter stating that the first letter had been a hoax.

Several factors may promote inter-organizational coordination: *First*, a clear division of labour may promote inter-organizational coordination processes, as responsibilities are clarified. A clear division of labour will be difficult to achieve and maintain in a crisis, because it requires inter-organizational coordination of multiple organizations, and decisions have to be made quickly.

An unclear division of labour may hinder resolution of a crisis. In Operation Waiheke, several organizations, and approximately 100 individuals, were involved. The report on the operation gives the impression that the division of labour was fairly clear. However, this was not the case in relation to some issues. The two 'operations received some criticism for a lack of clarity in decision-making' (MAF 2006, p. 14). In particular, the participants found the distinction between 'technical decisions' and 'management decisions' to be unclear. Technical decisions concern operational issues, whereas management decisions concern strategic policy and governance issues (MAF 2006, p. 14).

Second, having arenas for coordination can promote inter-organizational coordination processes. Using the NRC to undertake inter-organizational coordination worked efficiently in both operations. 'The whole-of-government mechanisms built into the new NRC procedures worked well in general, as they required the co-location of liaison people from other agencies at the NRC' (MAF 2006, p. 15). However, the organizational structure did not

affect the behaviour of all participants. 'A number of people involved in the operations were unfamiliar with the new organizational structure' (MAF 2006, p. 13).

Third, the organizations involved in this crisis pursued the following goals: to demonstrate that FMD did not exist in New Zealand; to reduce the potential negative impact on trade; to ensure public order and confidence and to ensure efficient communication (MAF 2006, p. 11). Although the organizations cooperated to resolve the potential crisis, some priority conflicts arose, for example between trade and disease management: 'during Operation Waiheke some actions were taken for trade reasons rather than disease management reasons' (MAF 2006, p. 14).

Fourth, active leadership may promote inter-organizational processes, because it should ensure a clear focus and the implementation of decisions. The MAF was responsible for the inter-organizational coordination of the MAF BNZ, the NZFSA, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Police, in addition to several other agencies and industry actors. Although the MAF performed this task fairly well, the report on the operation identified room for improvement: the 'MAF must improve its preparedness for and ability to respond to a major exotic disease outbreak' (MAF 2006, p. 3).

Fifth, a clear obligation/positive attitude to participate in inter-organizational coordination processes may promote inter-organizational coordination. A crisis such as an FMD outbreak requires the participation of people with clear obligations in such inter-organizational coordination processes. Still, such obligations can be threatened by operations that take a long time. These two operations did not take a long time. However, longer operations may present a greater challenge: 'There are significant concerns relating to the sustainability of a longer operation; an outbreak of FMD could take up to six months and possibly longer to eradicate'. 'During a long-running disease outbreak, MAF will need enough staff available to cover 24 hours, seven days a week' (MAF 2006, p. 25).

The obligation to participate may be linked to trust between the participants. Participating will often be easier when the participants trust each other. However, the report does not deal with trust in any detail, focusing more on the formal aspects. Accordingly, the report does not contain any empirical findings relating to this factor.

Sixth, small geographical distances can promote inter-organizational coordination, by making it easier to arrange meetings. Further, inter-organizational coordination will often be stronger when the number of organizations involved in such coordination remains low. The potential FMD crisis involved several organizations, which made inter-organizational coordination more challenging. In Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, a conflict, for instance, arose in relation to the location of the response centre (MAF 2006, p. 14).

Seventh, the report indicates that the outcome of the inter-organizational processes was strong coordination. The conclusion of the report is: ‘The whole-of-government coordination arrangements worked well but can be improved upon’ (MAF 2006, p. 3). This finding provides strong support for the instrumental-hierarchical perspective.

7.7 Discussion of the findings

The first factor that promotes coordination is the division of labour. The division of labour during the FMD scare was fairly clear, a finding which supports the instrumental-hierarchical perspective. This finding contrasts with the other theoretical perspectives.

The second factor that promotes coordination is arenas for coordination. Such arenas existed, and the NRC ensured that inter-organizational coordination worked efficiently during both operations. The instrumental-hierarchical perspective explains the findings relating to this factor, while the other three perspectives do not.

The third factor that promotes coordination is common goals. The actors worked together to resolve the situation, and this finding is therefore also explained by the instrumental-hierarchical perspective. However, some priority conflicts arose during the crisis between trade and disease management, indicating that at least part of the explanation is provided by the instrumental-negotiation perspective.

The fourth factor that promotes coordination is active leadership. Even though the report suggested some improvements, the MAF performed well in its role as lead agency. The empirical material supports the instrumental-hierarchical perspective, rather than the three other theoretical perspectives.

The fifth factor that promotes coordination is a positive attitude to participate in inter-organizational coordination processes. Trust between the actors is also important. The fact that the operations worked successfully, indicates both that there was a positive attitude to participate, and that the organizations involved trusted each other. However, since the report on the operations does not focus on these aspects, it is impossible to distinguish between the theoretical perspectives with regard to this factor.

The sixth factor that promotes inter-organizational coordination is a small geographical distance between the organizations and the involvement of a small number of organizations. Since the theoretical perspectives do not make any predictions relating to this factor, they will not be discussed here (The distances between participants and the number of organizations can be compatible with the expectations of all four theoretical perspectives.)

The seventh factor is the outcome – strong coordination – which supports the instrumental-hierarchical perspective.

Factors	The instrumental-hierarchical perspective	The instrumental-negotiation perspective	The institutional-cultural perspective	The institutional-myth perspective
Division of labour	x			
Meeting arenas	x			
Goals	x	(x)		
Leadership/steering	x			
Attitudes and trust			x	x
Geographical distance/the number of organizations involved	x	x	x	x
Outcome	x			

Table 5: Inter-organizational food safety crisis coordination in New Zealand

7.8 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed inter-organizational coordination of food safety issues in New Zealand, which introduced food safety reforms in 2002 and 2007, and has again done so in 2010 (However, it will be impossible to evaluate effects of the 2010 reform short time after the reform is implemented). In New Zealand, the Ministry of Fisheries and the Ministry of Health are less involved in food safety issues than in Norway. The 2002 reform introduced a new food safety agency attached to the MAF. However, the food safety agency was separated from the MAF in 2007, and established as a ministry. The instrumental-negotiation perspective explains the finding that the NZFSA and the MAF struggled with the SAB model, and that conflicts were apparently a part of the relationship. However, this finding

could also be compatible with the instrumental-hierarchical perspective, because the organizational structure was not clear enough to ensure a good accountability framework in practice. The 2007 reform introduced a challenge, because the structure required horizontal inter-organizational coordination rather than vertical inter-organizational coordination. The instrumental-hierarchical perspective explains the findings and the efforts of the two organizations to overcome the inter-organizational coordination challenge.

8 Comparison of reforms in Norway and New Zealand

8.1 Introduction

Following the analysis of Norway and New Zealand as independent cases in chapters 6 and 7, this dissertation now moves on to discuss the two cases jointly, in the light of the theoretical perspectives. This chapter focuses on the following research question: How can the theoretical perspectives explain the differences and similarities between these two countries? How do the food safety reforms implemented in Norway and New Zealand compare to reforms implemented in other policy fields in these two countries?

First, this chapter sums up the various organizational structures of food safety issues in Norway and New Zealand. *Second*, general reflections on inter-organizational coordination will be discussed. *Third*, the food safety reform Norway implemented in 2004 will be compared to the food safety reform New Zealand implemented in 2002. *Fourth*, the food safety reform implemented in Norway in 2004 will be compared to the food safety reform implemented in New Zealand in 2007. *Fifth*, the food safety reform implemented in Norway in 2004 will be compared to the food safety reform implemented in New Zealand in 2010, and potential effects of this last reform will be outlined. *Sixth*, the food safety reforms implemented in Norway (2004) and New Zealand (2002, 2007 and 2010) will be compared to general reform trends in the same two countries. *Seventh*, the potential for generalization as well as a reflection on the theoretical strategy will be presented.

8.2 Organizational structures in Norway and New Zealand

Chapter 6 and chapter 7 respectively discussed the effects of food safety reforms on inter-organizational food safety coordination in Norway and New Zealand. Comparing these two countries' has several advantages. First, a comparison provides insights into similarities and differences. Such similarities and differences may illuminate the effects of reforms. Second, variation between Norway and New Zealand with regard to the independent variables may show how different inter-organizational processes operate in different organizational structures and cultures. Third, the amount of empirical data used analytically will be greater when Norway and New Zealand are compared than when Norway and New Zealand are analyzed separately. Having a greater amount of empirical data may strengthen the analysis of inter-organizational coordination. Although Norway and New Zealand have selected very different organizational structures, both structures require inter-organizational coordination.

Why study these two countries? The researcher in this dissertation has selected these two countries for study for two reasons: First, inter-organizational coordination is often more challenging than intra-organizational coordination. Second, both countries require inter-organizational food safety coordination at the ministry level. This dissertation compares inter-organizational coordination in the two countries by reference to several factors: division of labour, meeting arenas, goals, leadership, attitudes, and IT systems/geographical distance.

Norway and New Zealand have selected very different organizational structures. Norway implemented a food safety reform in 2004, subsequent to which the Norwegian food safety agency (NFSA) has been affiliated with three ministries – the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF), the Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs (MFCA) and the Ministry of Health and Care Services (MHCS). In contrast, New Zealand implemented food safety reforms in 2002, 2007 and 2010. The 2002 reform introduced the New Zealand Food Safety

Authority (NZFSA), attached as a semi-autonomous body to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF). In 2007, however, the NZFSA was separated from the MAF and established as a ministry. In July 2010, the NZFSA and the MAF were merged into a single organization in New Zealand; the MAF. This new ministry is a response to an initiative from the State Services Commission across several policy fields, and one such policy field is food safety.

One similarity between Norway and New Zealand is that both countries have implemented reforms to ensure achievement of food safety issues. According to an instrumental-hierarchical perspective, leaders may implement reforms to be better prepared for managing such food safety issues. Another similarity is that the two countries both seem to take food safety issues seriously.

One difference between Norway and New Zealand is that the New Zealand Ministry of Health (MoH) is less involved in inter-organizational food safety processes than Norway's MHCS. An argument against having the NZFSA an agency attached to the MoH was that food issues 'would struggle for status and recognitions within the Ministry of Health' (Report 2006b, p. 8). In most countries the ministry of health is largely responsible for managing hospitals and other time- and resource-intensive health-related tasks. Thus, food safety issues might suffer under such an organization.

Due to this reasoning, in New Zealand, there is more horizontal inter-organizational coordination between the NZFSA and the MAF than between the NZFSA and the MoH. In Norway, by contrast, the MHCS participates in inter-organizational meeting arenas every week, and the MHCS also has a formal responsibility for the food safety agency. There is therefore a strong formal link between the ministry responsible for health issues and the food safety agency. In addition, while the NZFSA is not attached to the Ministry of Fisheries (MoF), the MFCA in Norway is responsible for the country's food safety agency. In New

Zealand, the MoF manages fisheries resources, but is not responsible for food safety. Therefore, the two countries have selected quite different organizational structures for managing food safety issues. Because the selection of organizational forms may channel behaviour in certain directions, such organizational forms therefore matter. For example, placing food safety issues in a ministry may increase the chances of political considerations affecting food safety issues. In contrast, placing food safety issues in an agency attached to a ministry may increase the chances of professional issues and consumer considerations affecting food safety issues. Organizational boundaries therefore matter (Egeberg 2003).

Furthermore, Norway distinguishes between risk assessment and risk management, and has assigned these functions to different organizations. Risk assessment means measuring the likelihood of food safety crises and threats to human health (MHCS 2003). Risk management means making use of such assessments, and finding out when and how the government should adopt measures to deal with identified risks. Although New Zealand has also separated these functions, it has placed them within the same organization. Moreover, the food safety reforms of 2002 and 2007 did not involve the introduction of a new food act in New Zealand (although a new act will be introduced in 2010/2011). By contrast, Norway implemented a new food act as a part of the food safety reform in 2004.

8.3 The challenge of coordination – general reflections

According to the instrumental-hierarchical perspective, *inter*-organizational coordination of information-sharing and decision-making is frequently more challenging than *intra*-organizational coordination. Why is this? Organizational boundaries are an important part of the answer to this question, as these boundaries channel information about current problems and possible solutions to organization members. The members need to take this kind of

information into account in their decision-making. In addition, communication is usually restricted by the organizational boundaries, i.e. there is more formal and informal communication within an organization than between organizations (Egeberg 2003; Egeberg and Trondal 2009). Therefore, such information is often *not* obtained easily by people outside an organization, for example when leaders communicate information to organization members via an intranet or by e-mail. Such information is also often provided in internal meetings, when leaders set out expectations that the organization members are supposed to meet in their decision-making and processing of cases. For example, if one person quits as an organization member, the person will not receive formal information from the actual organization anymore, and not receive e-mail or have access to the intranet. To stay in contact and receive information the person needs informal contacts, or will have to consult external web pages. Such barriers affect leadership in inter-organizational processes. Leaders often control decision-making, information-sharing and goal-achievement within an organization, but not between organizations. Therefore, *inter-organizational* coordination is frequently more challenging than intra-organizational coordination. Generally, it requires more efforts to ensure inter-organizational coordination than intra-organizational coordination.

Another important element is whether horizontal or vertical elements are involved in coordination of food safety issues. According to the instrumental-hierarchical perspective, *horizontal* inter-organizational coordination is frequently more difficult to achieve than *vertical* inter-organizational coordination. Why is this? Vertical inter-organizational coordination often involves a superior organization that formally has the right to instruct a subordinate organization. Alternatively, the superior organization, for example a ministry, communicates expectations (such as goals) to the subordinate organization, for example a food safety agency. The subordinate organization has to report to the superior organization

on goal-achievement and current and future challenges (Egeberg 2003; Egeberg and Trondal 2009). A central element of vertical inter-organizational coordination in the state sector is the principle of ministerial steering, i.e. the principle that the ministry has formal responsibility for activities both within the ministry and in organizations subordinate to it, such as a food safety agency. Such vertical coordination requires that the ministries have a formal and actual opportunity to instruct a subordinate agency.

In horizontal inter-organizational coordination processes, on the other hand, instruction is absent, because organizations operate on the same hierarchical level, and are not involved in superior-subordinate relationships. When organizations operate on the same hierarchical level, disagreements can be harder to resolve than when the organizations operate on different levels within a hierarchy, because horizontal-inter-organizational coordination processes frequently lack hierarchical instruments. Therefore, horizontal networks across organizations theoretically include more challenging accountability frameworks than vertical inter-organizational hierarchies. According to an instrumental-negotiation perspective, if the actors participating in the inter-organizational horizontal networks agree on core issues, horizontal inter-organizational coordination will generally not be a big challenge. If actors agree, decisions will easily be made. However, if the main actors' disagree, such coordination will be a great challenge, and coalition building, conflicts and negotiations will frequently take place (Bolman and Deal 2007).

One obvious question is therefore: Is horizontal inter-organizational coordination impossible? The short answer is 'no'. Such coordination is not impossible, but that greater efforts are required to overcome the challenges connected to *inter*-organizational coordination than to overcome those associated with *intra*-organizational coordination. In addition, greater efforts are required to overcome the challenges connected to horizontal inter-organizational coordination than to overcome the challenges connected to vertical inter-

organizational coordination. Such efforts can be labelled compensating efforts. According to the instrumental-hierarchical perspective, the leaders of organizations involved in inter-organizational coordination need to make systematic efforts to identify how coordination processes should work to ensure efficient coordination. Various measures may produce strong inter-organizational coordination. This dissertation has discussed division of labour, meeting arenas, common goals, leadership/steering, attitudes/obligation, and the number of organizations involved.

In addition, different policy fields may require different efforts, because challenges vary from field to field. Moreover, the institutional-cultural perspective suggests that organizational culture may vary from organization to organization. Cultural differences can affect both how inter-organizational coordination processes operate and the compatibility of the selected measures. Inter-organizational coordination may therefore cause conflicts, if organizations with different cultures are involved. This will make such coordination even more difficult. A consequence of this is that context will be important for understanding how various efforts work across different cases.

Why can such issues easily lead to conflicts? Ansell and Vogel (2006) describe the organization of food safety issues as an area involving ‘contested governance’. The food-safety policy field has some controversial and sensitive features, because professional, scientific and political views all play important parts in food safety issues. Such views may sometimes be contested, as professionals, scientists and politicians may pursue different interests, and focus on various aspects. In such cases, it may be difficult to find a good balance between these interests. In fact, the interests may be too contradictory to find a balance. Politicians need to find organizational structures that take these considerations into account. This is especially important given that, frequently, several organizations have a ‘stake’ in food safety, making conflicts even more likely. As Asdal (2005, p. 48) argues,

food policy does not attach naturally to one organization. Decision-making in food safety issues may therefore be challenging by nature.

Because organization of food safety issues frequently cross organizational boundaries, governance may easily be contested. Such ‘contested governance’ represents a more ‘fundamental’ form of conflict than regular policy-making, according to the instrumental-negotiation perspective. ‘It is characterized by challenges to the fundamental legitimacy of who should make decisions and where, how, and on what basis they should be made and implemented’ (Ansell 2006, p. 329). Therefore, ‘contested governance’ will frequently lead to structural changes in order to resolve the legitimacy problems related to the existing structure (Rothstein 2006, p. 153).

The relevance of such issues depends on the history of the country in question (and the nature of the issue causing conflict). For example, a crisis, such as BSE, may make issues more controversial and sensitive, and lead to the introduction of reforms. According to the institutional-cultural perspective, such situations, in which a long period of stability is ended by a reform, can be regarded as an ‘institutional shock’. A short period of instability while the reform is being implemented will be followed by a long period of stability after implementation of the reform (Streeck and Thelen 2005). However, research shows that this transition is not always a smooth affair. According to the instrumental-hierarchical perspective a new reform may head off potential problems by introducing new organizational structures. However, the institutional-cultural perspective suggests that reforms may easily have unintended consequences (Pierson 2000, p. 483), such as lack of goal achievement, less cost efficiency or more fragmentation.

8.4 Comparing Norway's reform (2004) to New Zealand's reform (2002–2007)

Comparing Norway and New Zealand brings to light an interesting paradox. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (1993, p. 895), a paradox is a 'statement that seems to be absurd or contradictory but is or may be true'. After a comparison, a relevant expectation should be this: From an instrumental-hierarchical perspective, less conflict should be observed when a food safety agency is attached to just one ministry, as in New Zealand between 2002 and 2007, *than* under the three-ministry organizational structure implemented in Norway in 2004. According to the instrumental-negotiation perspective, the latter structural solution should be more complicated than the former. The general observation that inter-organizational coordination is more demanding than intra-organizational coordination makes it necessary to ask the following question: Why has inter-organizational coordination worked satisfactorily in Norway since 2004, but not so satisfactorily in New Zealand between 2002 and 2007?

Moreover, why has Norway not experienced fragmentation since three ministries are involved in professional steering of one food safety agency? Before answering these questions, it is important to highlight that comparing reforms across countries is challenging, as the same reform may have different effects in various countries, due to the differing contexts (Nash *et al.* 2006). According to an institutional-cultural perspective, measuring effects of reforms require much information about the context. It is frequently difficult to distinguish clearly between a case and its context. The researcher must therefore always contextualize the reforms.

While the three ministries and the food safety agency in Norway have managed to build an inter-organizational coordination framework after 2004 that is integrated both vertically and horizontally, New Zealand struggled with vertical inter-organizational

coordination in the period 2002–2007. According to the instrumental-negotiation perspective, unclear accountabilities are an important part of inter-organizational processes. New Zealand's problems can be traced to its use of the SAB (Semi Autonomous Body), which incorporated a very complicated accountability framework, thus increasing the likelihood of tensions. In 2005 – Scott and McKenzie (2005, p. 13) concluded that, '[t]he inherent conflicts of roles and the suggestion that these are having an impact, indicate that the SAB model will generate problems at all levels, and will take considerable efforts to maintain'. Therefore, inter-organizational vertical coordination was challenging, and led to the 2007-reform where the SAB was eliminated. The instrumental-hierarchical perspective suggests that ensuring a close connection between an organizational structure and desired effects requires a clear accountability framework. Even though the food safety agency in New Zealand was attached to a single ministry, the accountability framework was confusing for the participants of the following reason: Unlike in Norway, the Executive Director of the NZFSA could advise the Minister of MAF independently of the Director General of the MAF. The Director General could delegate performance of his functions, but not formal responsibility for such performance. This model featured, in particular, problems with the division of labour and a low conflict-threshold.

If Norway were to adopt the New Zealand model, the Director General of the food safety agency would be able to advise the three ministers independently of the three Secretary Generals of the three ministries (the MHCS, the MFCA and the MAF). This could easily result in conflicts if the Director General of the food safety agency had different opinions to those of the Secretary Generals, or if the three Secretary Generals disagreed among themselves. The instrumental-hierarchical perspective suggests that this situation can easily produce conflicts, since the problem is grounded in the formal organizational

structure, i.e. the relationship between formal organizational responsibility and actual behaviour.

Generally, the organizational structure introduced for Norway's handling of food safety issues in 2004 has not been contested, which challenges the prediction of the instrumental-negotiation perspective. In contrast to the situation in Norway, the other country New Zealand struggled with vertical inter-organizational coordination in the period 2002–2007, where tensions existed in the inter-organizational processes (Report 2006b).

There has been no significant debate in Norway regarding further reforms to amend the organizational structure (with the exception of media speculation that the government would transfer the responsibilities of the MFCA to other ministries after the 2009 election). Nevertheless, the instrumental-negotiation perspective does partly explain the finding that ministries sometimes have diverging interests and need to make compromises. However, it does not provide a particularly solid explanation – a greater number of conflicts and diverging interests should have been observed if the instrumental-negotiation perspective were entirely accurate. Even though the organizational structure in Norway does not feature the unclear accountability framework seen in New Zealand between 2002 and 2007, inter-organizational coordination still demands intensive efforts. What kinds of factors work to prevent inter-organizational challenges in the case of Norway?

One factor is that the government in Norway promotes inter-organizational coordination by supporting arenas for civil servants to establish decision-making rules, share information, discuss policy and make decisions. For example, the three ministries meet each week to discuss food safety issues and the three ministries and the food safety agency meet each week to discuss issues related to the EU and Norwegian positions. The three ministries responsible for food safety in Norway appear to have created an integrated inter-organizational coordination framework through which they ensure that *inter-organizational*

coordination affects *intra*-organizational coordination. Such arenas are very important in relation to issues that cross organizational boundaries, such as food safety issues. According to the instrumental-hierarchical perspective, the inter-organizational structure is an instrument for directing behaviour. The existence of such meetings can also be explained from an institutional-cultural perspective. After these meetings were established, they have taken place regularly and routinely. Such a routine makes coordination more institutionalized over time. For an institutional-myth perspective to provide a solid explanation of the findings, the ministries should, for example, have presented the inter-organizational meetings, for example on the web. However, information about such meetings was only gathered through the interviews done in this dissertation. No information about such meetings was seen on the web.

Meeting arenas are a very important means of ensuring consistent behaviour by the three ministries. In these arenas, cases are discussed to ensure that the food safety agency receives unified decisions. Since the three ministries are all located in the city of Oslo, meetings can be arranged easily. Horizontally, the three ministries meet frequently to ensure inter-organizational coordination. It seems that such meetings are the most important factor in ensuring strong coordination, although they do have the obvious drawback of costing much time and energy, and therefore increasing transaction costs of the organizations involved in these processes.

According to the instrumental-hierarchical perspective, an inter-organizational structure may be too unspecific to direct behaviour. If an organizational structure lacks instruments for guiding behaviour, the result can easily be a weak connection between the inter-organizational structure and actual coordinating behaviour. Nevertheless, the matrix structure makes it possible to refer cases to higher hierarchical levels if conflicts or disagreements arise. This feature helps the ministries to resolve disagreements. In addition,

the three ministries meet very frequently to ensure inter-organizational coordination and to resolve issues at an early stage. This finding may explain that the three ministries and the food safety agency in Norway have managed to build an inter-organizational coordination framework that is integrated both vertically and horizontally. In contrast, New Zealand had some inter-organizational challenges in the period 2002–2007⁵ despite the fact that they coordinated issues ‘at a day-to-day level’ (Report 2006b, p. 2).

Another important factor in Norway is that one leader, a Deputy Director General, is responsible for ensuring inter-organizational coordination during the weekly meetings between the three ministries. The institutional-cultural perspective suggests that this leader, in order to ensure inter-organizational coordination, needs to find compromises and encourage workable solutions upon which the three ministries can agree. This kind of leadership frequently requires extensive experience in the policy field. In New Zealand, by contrast, the leadership (‘chair’) rotated in the inter-organizational processes between the MAF and the NZFSA. On the one hand, rotating this leadership role may reduce conflicts over leadership roles from an instrumental-negotiation perspective. On the other hand, rotating the leadership may cause problems with consistency in decision-making if various leaders have different values, various cultural backgrounds and different ways of leading meetings, according to an institutional-cultural perspective.

In addition, solving inter-organizational problems and challenges require the expertise of various organizations. Weber and Khademian (2008) suggest that the inter-organizational coordination of actors from various organizations is required to inject expertise into networks, such as the horizontal inter-organizational framework in Norway. ‘*A fundamental challenge to effectively managing any public problem in a networked setting is*

⁵ One method challenge here is that more data exist about the food safety reform in Norway (2004) than about the food safety reform in New Zealand (2002), because the interviews in New Zealand focused mainly on the 2007 reform.

the transfer, receipt and integration of knowledge across participants' (Weber and Khademian 2008, p. 334).

In addition, making three ministries responsible for a single food safety agency was a decision made by politicians. According to the instrumental-hierarchical perspective, administrative leaders have an obligation to make inter-organizational coordination processes work efficiently to meet the goals formulated by politicians. Administrative leaders in the public sector need to take political considerations into account in decision-making. Therefore, participating in inter-organizational processes may be an important way to implement the political decision to have three ministries responsible for food safety issues. Vertically, the three ministries and the food safety agency in Norway coordinate their activities more frequently with regard to directorate functions (such as regulation), than with regard to the food-inspection function. The food safety agency has great autonomy in relation to concrete food-inspections. The ministries are only concerned with general trends related to quality and quantity of such food inspections. However, the inter-organizational meetings, the expectation letter and the budget proposition help to ensure inter-organizational coordination. For instance, the three ministries send a common expectation letter to the NFSA.

Moreover, a clear division of labour between the organizations involved in food safety is an important factor in ensuring inter-organizational horizontal inter-organizational coordination. Alexander (1995, p. 274) shows that 'complementary, rather than overlapping, domains' are significant in ensuring inter-organizational coordination. Overlapping domains may cause conflicts, whereas complementary domains may stimulate interdependence and inter-organizational coordination. In Norway, some issues require a discussion of the division of labour, for example food labelling and the linking of professional and administrative issues. Further, the Norwegian MAF and the MFCA pursue business interests

(agriculture and fisheries), whereas the MHCS works in the interests of food consumers, seeking to protect and improve consumer health. Even though the three ministries sometimes pursue divergent interests, these interests do not usually challenge inter-organizational coordination. Generally, there seem to be very few conflicts between the three food ministries in Norway. As mentioned, this fact contrasts with the prediction of the instrumental-negotiation perspective. In New Zealand, a report (2006b, p. 14) discussed how inter-organizational coordination actually worked in practice: 'There are signs that the relationship between the Director-General [MAF] and the Executive Director [NZFSA] is not working as well as it needs to. There has been correspondence between the two alleging that one is unreasonably intruding on the "patch" of the other and, in so doing, not respecting the principles set out in the Relationship Agreement. Moreover, external stakeholders have commented to the effect that they perceive there to be significant relationship issues between the two'.

Conflicts generally reduce the level of trust between organizations. Inter-organizational coordination processes are challenging, and become even more challenging when conflicts arise. According to the institutional-cultural perspective, a culture of trust is an important factor in ensuring strong coordination in inter-organizational coordination processes. Conflicts can easily lead to distrust, and distrust can easily weaken coordination. Studying trust is a demanding task, since it is easier to understand a structure than a culture, in which trust is a part of the culture. Structural features are therefore easier to understand than cultural features. There are several features that contribute to trust among members within an organization.

In Norway's case, the actors at various levels in the three ministries seem to trust each other. One reason for this trust seems to be the low level of staff turnover. According to Alexander (1995, p. 18), a high level of staff turnover may reduce the level of inter-

organizational coordination because such turnover challenges the operation of routines. Routines in inter-organizational coordination processes seem to be an important part of making inter-organizational coordination work efficiently, as they ensure that actors meet regularly to exchange information, discuss cases and make decisions. In addition, a low level of staff turnover may indicate that the actors representing the various organizations enjoy participating in the inter-organizational coordination processes. High turnover may easily lead to frustration, and reduce staff energy, as new personnel need to be familiarized with existing routines. In Norway, turnover has been low in both horizontal and vertical inter-organizational coordination processes. According to Selznick (1957), institutionalization requires time, and may ensure commitment and attachment to involvement in inter-organizational processes: 'From the standpoint of the committed person, the organization is changed from an expendable tool into a valued source of personal satisfaction' (Selznick 1957, pp. 16–18). Unfortunately, no information is available on the level of staff turnover in New Zealand in this period of time between 2002 and 2007.

According to an instrumental-hierarchical perspective, the reform introduced in New Zealand in 2002 resulted in challenges to accountability (Report 2006b, pp. 10–11). There needs to be important linkages between the NZFSA and the MAF and the report discusses inter-organizational coordination, and how it can best be achieved. 'The need to maintain effective links between NZFSA and MAF is not questioned. The issue is whether these links are better maintained by having NZFSA as part of MAF as opposed to being separated' (Report 2006b, p. 20). The report discusses concerns about the risk of having the NZFSA as a separate ministry. 'If NZFSA was to be separated from MAF, there is a risk that these links would become strained and, eventually, fail' (Report 2006b, p. 19). Therefore, the report argues in favour of having the NZFSA attached to the MAF. However, since the report argues that the NZFSA should still be attached to the MAF it signifies that the organizational

solution of the 2002-reform ‘is not fatally flawed’ (Report 2006b, p. 13). This indicates that the organizational solution implemented in New Zealand in 2002 was not hopeless, and could produce some positive results. Scott and McKenzie (2005, p. 15) reached the conclusion ‘that NZFSA is an outstandingly competent regulator’. Despite the inter-organizational challenges, the organizational solution could direct behaviour in a desired direction, according to an instrumental-hierarchical perspective.

In several countries, reforms are triggered by food safety crisis. However, this has not been the case in either Norway or New Zealand, even though Norway did some *intra*-organizational changes after the *E.coli* outbreak (less comprehensive than a reform). Norway struggled with coordination in this case. Still, inter-organizational coordination between the two ministries (the MAF and the MHCS) and between the ministries and the food safety agency in Norway worked pretty well, according to an instrumental-hierarchical perspective. The MAF, however, challenged the division of labour between the MAF and the MHCS in Norway by playing a greater informal role, from an institutional-cultural perspective. Formal and informal responsibility was therefore decoupled. The MAF previously had greater responsibility for butchery hygiene, and its actions during the crisis were a path-dependent feature dating to this time. According to an instrumental-hierarchical perspective, New Zealand ensured strong coordination in the food safety crisis in New Zealand. However, some priority conflicts arose during the crisis between trade and disease management, indicating that at least part of the explanation is provided by the instrumental-negotiation perspective.

8.5 Comparing Norway's 2004 reform to New Zealand's 2007 reform

New Zealand implemented a food safety reform in 2007 – three years after Norway implemented its food safety reform in 2004. New Zealand's food safety reform involved vertical de-specialization and greater horizontal specialization, through the creation of a new ministry at the same vertical level as the MAF. The instrumental-hierarchical perspective suggests that this reform was a response to a situation where *horizontal*, rather than *vertical*, inter-organizational coordination processes were required. Theoretically, horizontal inter-organizational coordination processes are more challenging than vertical inter-organizational coordination processes, because of more unclear accountability framework in horizontal processes. Therefore, it *seems* paradoxical that New Zealand should introduce a more challenging organizational structure in 2007 than that implemented through the 2002 reform, if theoretical arguments should decide organizational solutions. Inter-organizational coordination has nevertheless worked satisfactorily in New Zealand since 2007 according to the interview respondents, even though they also discuss some challenges. What factors may explain this finding?

The reform implemented in 2007 eliminated the confusing organizational structure introduced through the 2002 reform, the so-called SAB-model. Since the vertical inter-organizational coordination framework (2002 reform) included conflicting features, the introduction of the horizontal inter-organizational coordination framework in 2007 actually helped to reduce coordination challenges. Accordingly, the instrumental-negotiation perspective does not appear to provide a solid explanation of the new situation after 2007.

In addition, the leadership of the NZFSA sought to ensure inter-organizational horizontal coordination in New Zealand. The Chief Executive of the NZFSA, Andrew McKenzie, instructed one of his directors to spend almost 40 percent of his work time at the MAF, to ensure inter-organizational coordination between the MAF and the food safety

agency. Ensuring that the same expertise is present in both organizations may be an example of duplication. This decision illustrates the importance of coordination across organizational boundaries. On the one hand, depending on the role of the director in the MAF, duplication⁶, may challenge the division of labour between the two organizations. If there is an unclear division of labour between organizations, accountability may be challenging, because the actors can be confused about who is responsible for various tasks.

On the other hand, duplication may increase inter-organizational coordination by ensuring that the two organizations are aware of each other's views. However, the fact that a director spends so much time in another organization than its formal affiliation, illustrates two important aspects: First, it illustrates that actors involved in food safety issues in New Zealand takes inter-organizational coordination seriously, and want to achieve best solutions for consumers of food. New Zealand depends on export revenues largely stemming from the agricultural sector and the production of food safety and food safety is therefore an important policy field in New Zealand. Second, it illustrates that inter-organizational coordination is challenging, and therefore requires instrumental efforts to ensure such coordination.

In addition, Andrew McKenzie makes, for instance, a PowerPoint presentation to new staff to ensure that they do not forget to coordinate their actions and routines with other relevant staff. In the terminology of the institutional-cultural perspective, this strategy is based on 'culture-building' – building a culture that promotes coordination and integration across organizational boundaries. The NZFSA's culture-building strategy illustrates that instrumental and cultural features may be combined.

Why make these efforts? In New Zealand, there have been tensions between the MAF and the NZFSA. On the one hand, the biosecurity department of the MAF focuses on preventing pest infestations and the spread of infectious diseases. The ministry therefore

⁶ See Landau (1969) for a discussion of duplication.

focuses on imports, and in particular the potential risks to New Zealand of importing food from other countries. The food safety agency, on the other hand, concentrates on both imports and exports. Its challenge is to create a balanced, consistent framework for food sales in New Zealand. This illustrates that it is challenging to have cross-cutting issues attached to various organizations⁷.

However, the finding that inter-organizational coordination has nevertheless worked satisfactorily in New Zealand since 2007 can also be explained methodologically. The interviews took place just one year after the second reform. Gathering data only a year after a reform was implemented may be too early to measure stable effects, although temporary effects can, of course be measured. A researcher cannot control organizational changes implemented in the field of study after the field has been selected by the researcher. In addition, interview respondents may well report and/or reflect on effects they *wish* to see in the future. Therefore, the empirical data on the 2007 reform must be analyzed carefully. Follow-up interviews of several respondents in New Zealand conducted by e-mail in 2009 have, however, helped to reduce this problem.

Further support for the methodological explanation is found in the fact that the MAF and the NZFSA in New Zealand were merged by July 2010. However, implementing three reforms in eight years would be unusual in most policy fields. This new reform will therefore be discussed later in this chapter. Another methodological challenge is that coordination is difficult to define and measure, since the concept involves various factors. This is true both for the interview respondents and the researcher. Such aspects may affect the empirical finding that Inter-organizational coordination has worked satisfactorily in New Zealand since 2007 according to the interview respondents, even though they also discuss some challenges.

⁷ This point was a main issue in the 2010 reform, which is discussed later in this chapter.

In addition, interview respondents may focus on different elements of coordination, and have various experiences of how inter-organizational coordination works in practice. This is true because actors may pursue different interests or have different roles in inter-organizational coordination processes. Pursuing such interests may require power and influence from an instrumental-negotiation perspective. This methodological challenge may be overcome by asking the interview respondents a sufficient number of questions, varying the type of questions in the interviews, as well as asking follow-up questions to make the interviewee formulate more precisely what he or she means. In both Norway and New Zealand, the interview respondents were asked multiple questions, including various follow-up questions. However, it is not easy to handle this challenge.

Moreover, the change from vertical to horizontal inter-organizational coordination makes it necessary to focus on inter-organizational meeting arenas. Since the 2007 reform, the MAF and NZFSA in New Zealand have faced some of the same challenges as the three ministries in Norway. As in Norway, the geographical distances between the organizations are small, making it possible to walk to meetings. Easy face-to-face contact of this kind often promotes inter-organizational coordination. The interview respondents, with one exception, also reported that the 2007 reform in New Zealand, involving the separation of NZFSA from the MAF, had not altered the frequency or the form of contact between the MAF and the NZFSA. The same inter-organizational coordination meetings are held, despite the separation. This appears paradoxical, as horizontal inter-organizational coordination has replaced vertical inter-organizational coordination. It should be expected that the number of meetings would decrease over time due to this change.

What can explain this finding? One important factor is the concept of path dependency, a core feature in the institutional-cultural perspective. This term describes the concept that decisions made by actors – for example actors in an inter-organizational food

safety coordination process – in the past will influence and constrict future decisions and actions (Pierson 2000). Since the MAF and the NZFSA will need to ensure inter-organizational coordination, they still need meeting arenas. Using the same arenas could be an advantage, because institutionalized arenas make it easier for organization members to ensure interaction and communication. They can use the same working procedures and methods as before. This reduces transaction costs in inter-organizational coordination processes. Such transaction costs may challenge coordination.

8.6 Comparing Norway's 2004 reform to New Zealand's 2010 reform

Organizational thinking involves assessing positive and negative aspects before implementing reforms (March 1981, p. 210). It could be argued that decision-makers in New Zealand has paid too little attention to the potential negative aspects of a further reform, since New Zealand implemented three reforms in eight years. Relevant questions will therefore be: Were three reforms necessary? Could other solutions have been considered at an earlier stage, thereby avoiding the implementation of three reforms in eight years? Reforms will always cost time, money and energy, and be stressful for organization members. 'Often reformers underestimate the extent of these until they get close to them' (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004, p. 33). Therefore, it may be important to pay attention to various organizational solutions *before* implementing a new reform. Still, reforms frequently have undesired effects, even if the actors have considered different organizational structures (Pierson 2000, p. 483). For example, the decision-makers in New Zealand did not take the challenge of inter-organizational coordination sufficiently into account in the two first reforms (vertical inter-organizational coordination 2002 and horizontal inter-organizational coordination in 2007).

One relevant factor is that reforms may be implemented for several reasons. Problems, such as lack of coordination, may trigger reforms. 'Problems imply a perceived discrepancy between desired and actual states, e.g. based on visions, goals, values and beliefs among reformers' (Lægreid and Roness 2002, p. 305). Reforms may therefore solve problems and be implemented for such a reason. This is an instrumental-rational explanation of a reform.

However, as the interview quotations showed, the 2007-reform in New Zealand worked pretty well (even though some interview respondents were concerned about inter-organizational coordination and how it would develop over time and function in the future). Therefore, it can be a challenge to explain why a new reform was established when it seemed like the reform worked pretty well. Still, reforms may be implemented more or less independently of actual problems. For example, the garbage can model (March and Olsen 1986), points in the direction of a rather loose link between actual problems and reforms. This model emphasizes various streams of choices, solutions, problems and participants, and these may be linked in different ways. This model implies a useful point connected to the food safety reform in New Zealand. 'Innovations [such as a new food safety reform] are not always discovered and adopted by organizations that are failing to meet goals and ignored by organizations that are successful' (March 1981, p. 213). The point is that countries may implement reforms despite of how an organizational structure actually works, according to an institutional-myth perspective. 'Public organizations attain legitimacy by deploying organizational reform methods and solutions regarded as modern and acceptable by the environment at a given period in time' (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 124). By implementing a new reform decision-makers can signify that they are modern and use every situation to innovate and find new solutions to existing or future problems. In addition, organizational solutions may work pretty well but cost too much money and therefore trigger a new reform.

Another relevant factor explaining the introduction of the 2010 reform is that the initiative for further reform came from outside the NZFSA/MAF framework after an assessment by the State Services Commission, i.e. an organization not directly involved in inter-organizational coordination of food safety issues. Nevertheless, the Chief Executive of the NZFSA seems to support the introduction of the new structure (Office of the Minister of State Services 2010).

So, what are the *potential* effects of the 2010 reform in New Zealand (merging the NZFSA and the MAF into a single organization)? The food safety reforms implemented in New Zealand (2002 and 2007) and Norway (2004) can provide insights in this respect. Since *inter-organizational* coordination is frequently more challenging than *intra-organizational* coordination, a merger will often ease the coordination burden (Egeberg 2003).

In addition, food safety issues involve issues that cross borders. Especially, the supply chain from ‘earth/sea to table’ is especially important in food safety issues. This supply chain may be easier to handle if one organization deals with issues related to food safety than if several organizations deal with such issues. After the merger, the new ministry in New Zealand focuses on this argument (MAF 2010–2013⁸, p. 3).

‘New Zealand’s prosperity depends on the reputation of New Zealand as a producer of high-quality, safe and environmentally sustainable products from animal, plants, food and related industries. The integrity of those supply chains from producer to consumer is critical. Amalgamating MAF and NZFSA will create a single integrated organisation strengthening the integrity and performance of the biological value chain and its contribution to our economy, environment and social wellbeing’.

⁸ ‘Since 2003, each department has produced a **Statement of Intent**. The Statement is compiled as part of the Budget process and sets out what a department is trying to achieve, how it will go about doing so, and the policy rationale behind its choice of interventions’ (Shaw and Eichbaum 2008, p. 100).

However, a merger can easily lead to more conflicts *within* the new organization, according to an instrumental-negotiation perspective. Why is that? After a merger, conflicts and considerations need to be taken into account within rather than between organizations. An organization that needs to take several different and maybe contrasting issues into account may increase the pressure on the political and administrative leadership to make decisions and find solutions. Pursuing individual, uncoordinated purposes often becomes difficult in merged organizations. Individual purposes may only be possible for organizations that do not focus on complex issues such as food safety. Therefore, coordination of complex issues and various considerations may require active leadership within an organization.

The fact that New Zealand has implemented three reforms in eight years illustrates that the division of labour between organizations may be subject to continuous negotiation, according to an instrumental-negotiation perspective. This fact also illustrates that it is difficult to find the best organizational structure, or to draw the best possible organizational boundaries to handle food safety issues. Many possible organizational structures can be implemented. However, all organizational structures may take some issues into account and leave others out. Therefore, the selection of a certain organizational structure determines what kind of issues that will most likely be taken into account. For example, a ministry of health may theoretically pay more attention to health issues than a ministry of agriculture, and a ministry of agriculture may theoretically pay more attention to business issues than health issues. In practice, however, a ministry of agriculture will seldom, hopefully, pursue business issues in a way that challenges consumer health. Still, both the UK and the rest of the EU experienced such internal clash of interests in the 1990s, because of the BSE-crisis (Ansell and Vogel 2006).

In addition, the institutional-cultural perspective states that merging different cultures into a single organizational culture may be difficult and challenging for both people in

charge of a reform process and all the employees in an organization. Mergers can therefore easily cause conflicts between various cultures. For example, Norway's 2004 reform merged several food safety agencies into one agency. Grahm-Haga (2007) points out that the different food safety agencies in Norway had various working methods. Creating a common set of standard working methods as a new agency was therefore a great challenge. Such efforts take time, resources and energy. In the terminology of Selznick (1957, p. 16), this is described as incremental institutional growth over time: 'The degree of institutionalization depends on how much leeway there is for personal and group interaction' However, even though this growth is incremental and takes time, there is a rational strategy behind it: To better perform a holistic and a consistent food inspector role across various district offices in Norway.

The institutional-cultural perspective suggests that it will take time to build a new, shared organizational culture following New Zealand's latest (2010) reform. On the one hand, the two organizations involved have a history of working together, which may make structural change easier to implement. On the other hand, the two organizations differ in size, which easily creates a situation where the staff of the NZFSA (a small organization) may feel the culture of the MAF (a bigger organization) as a potential threat to their identity. Therefore, building a common organizational culture may require instrumental steering as well as cultural leadership by the leaders of the organization. In addition, it may be stressful for the employees to work within an organization where organizational boundaries have been changed radically three times within eight years.

The literature nevertheless suggests that there are different views regarding the extent to which an organizational culture can be steered (Jamil 2005). The most widespread understanding is that organizational cultures grow naturally and incrementally over time, and that it is impossible or very difficult to steer them. The opposing view is that organizational

cultures can be steered in a desired direction using various culture-building measures, such as social events, leader seminars and the conscious use of symbols.

8.7 Comparison of food safety reforms and general reform trends

The institutional-cultural perspective suggests that a researcher who wants to compare food safety reforms in Norway and New Zealand with a focus on inter-organizational coordination must contextualize the reforms (Christensen and Lægreid 2001b). The political context matters when political and administrative leaders implement reforms, because it ‘refers to the political aspects of the environment that are relevant to action’ (Nash *et al.* 2006, p. 1). These political aspects may relate to both national and international features of the environment, such as political institutions, political actors, pressure groups and important political debates.

The political context frequently varies between countries, and leaders therefore often select different organizational structures due to such contextual differences. ‘In some contexts, it will be more effective to act in a certain way; in other contexts, acting in the same way would be ineffective’, according to Nash *et al.* (2006, p. 1). It is therefore possible for countries to select different organizational structures and nevertheless achieve similar outcomes, such as greater inter-organizational coordination. This is in line with what Gerring (2005, p. 61) labels ‘equifinality’⁹.

However, political and administrative leaders may also select the same organizational structures and yet produce different outcomes, due to differences in the cultural contexts. This is in accordance with the logic behind most similar systems design (George and Bennett 2005; Gerring 2007). Researchers therefore need to take multiple contexts into account when discussing inter-organizational coordination in order to properly understand what kind of

⁹ A definition of ‘equifinality’ is: ‘Multiple causal paths leading to the same outcome’ (Gerring 2007, p. 213).

factors that affect an outcome. How do the food safety reforms implemented in Norway (2004) and New Zealand (2002, 2007 and 2010) fit into the general reform picture in these two countries?

The political contexts in New Zealand and Norway differ greatly. In general, New Zealand has implemented more comprehensive reforms than Norway. The instrumental-hierarchical perspective states that leaders implement reforms to secure desired effects. The NPM reforms implemented in New Zealand in the 1980s affected the potential for successful inter-organizational coordination by changing both the size and the structure of the state sector, and by introducing structural devolution, single-purpose organizations and privatization (Boston *et al.* 1996; Boston and Eichbaum 2005). Such reforms affect the degree of inter-organizational coordination between state-sector organizations. The reforms of the 1980s in New Zealand did not focus on inter-organizational coordination at all, only on inter-organizational specialization. The result was a demand for more coordination in general. Especially, it was also a demand for inter-organizational coordination to handle the new structural governance challenges.

However, since circa 2000, the state sector in New Zealand has focused more on inter-organizational coordination, because the implementation of NPM in the 1980s caused inter-organizational fragmentation (For further discussion see Gregory 2003; Gregory 2006; Norman 2003; Boston and Eichbaum 2005; Chapman and Duncan 2007; State Services Commission 2008). This new, whole-of-government (WG) approach encompasses various strategies, such as the establishment of teams and networks. However, WG has not replaced NPM. Rather, its purpose is to find practical ways of ensuring greater inter-organizational coordination within a NPM framework (Christensen and Lægreid 2007a). It is worth noting that mergers (de-specialization) can also be compatible with the WG approach, as they focus on more holistic solutions to problems (Askim *et al.* 2010, p. 232).

Although Norway has implemented some NPM reforms, such as structural devolution, its NPM reforms have not by far been as radical as those of New Zealand (Christensen *et al.* 2007a). Norway has implemented reforms more reluctantly, and the degree of inter-organizational coordination within central government has not been challenged as radically as in New Zealand. However, Norway has a long tradition of strong sector ministries that mainly focus on individual policy fields. Achieving inter-organizational coordination between these policy fields will therefore always be challenging. Nevertheless, since 2005, Norway has concentrated more on inter-organizational coordination, taking the same path that New Zealand adopted in the early 2000s (Lie and Christensen 2007).

How do the food safety reform in Norway and the food safety reforms (2002, 2007 and 2010) in New Zealand fit the general reform pictures in these two countries? Norway's 2004 food safety reform introduced several strategies compatible with the WG approach. At agency level, various food safety agencies were merged to ensure greater coordination and efficiency. At ministry level, by contrast, three ministries are involved in coordination, effectively forming a network. Such networks are important for ensuring inter-organizational coordination in Norway, given Norway's strong sector ministries. After the 2000s New Zealand introduced such networks in the state sector to ensure coordination after a time struggling with inter-organizational challenges. Such networks illustrate the need to see various policy fields in connection.

However, the food safety reform also introduced a merger at the agency level in Norway (establishment of the food safety agency), another feature compatible with the WG approach. Such mergers reduce or even eliminate the demand for extensive inter-organizational coordination. For instance, the food safety reform in Norway may be compared to the new welfare administration in Norway. These reforms share four

similarities. First, both reforms involved a merger of several organizations, according to an instrumental-hierarchical perspective. Second, both reforms are comprehensive, involving many civil servants at different levels. Third, both reforms have required time to begin working efficiently, according to an institutional-cultural perspective, because they include such complex features. Fourth, both reforms have faced intra-organizational cultural issues due to significant structural complexity and the need for civil servants with totally different backgrounds to work together. According to an institutional-cultural perspective, values and informal norms play a significant role in organizations (Christensen *et al.* 2007a, p. 37). It therefore takes time before a new culture grows up or the leadership manages to build new and common cultural features and common identities in new organizations.

In New Zealand, the 2002 food safety reform created a new agency through structural devolution. This is consistent with the general NPM framework, which focuses on greater vertical inter-organizational specialization and structural devolution. However, in 2002, New Zealand was generally focused more on WG than on NPM. Therefore, the food safety reform implemented in New Zealand in 2002 does not fit the general reform picture in New Zealand at that time, because the general reform picture was focusing on WG. Ironically, the food safety reform in New Zealand implemented in 2002 fit the general reform picture in Norway at that time because Norway did focus on NPM at that time. After 2005, however, Norway focused on WG.

The 2007 reform in New Zealand concentrated more on vertical de-specialization, which requires horizontal inter-organizational processes, and was thus more consistent with WG than NPM. The 2010 reform involve a merger (amalgamation) of two organizations; the NZFSA and the MAF. Now, the NZFSA has become an integrated part of the MAF, but the NZFSA continues to have its own web page (www.nzfsa.nz). This amalgamation strategy may potentially solve the earlier inter-organizational challenges. However, the reform may

also introduce additional *intra*-organizational challenges, because the new organization will have to handle all of the conflicts and dilemmas that were previously divided between two organizations. New Zealand's new reforms are also compatible with the WG approach. It is therefore clear that the WG approach is broad, encompassing various responses and strategies, from mergers to formal and informal networks that cross organizational boundaries. One lesson is that the WG approach has limited value as an analytical tool, because it covers such diverse strategies.

8.8 Generalization and a reflection on the theoretical strategy

How can the cases of New Zealand and Norway be generalized for application to other cases? The application of a single case to other cases is difficult, and studying two cases may therefore be advantageous. However, the case study design does not include specific techniques for testing uncertainty, which may be a problem. Such testing will always be important in discussions concerning generalization. The advantage of large-N statistical analysis over case studies is the possibility of testing uncertainty (Andersen 1997; Gerring 2007).

Nevertheless, as context is important in analyzing coordination, case studies may be more suited to analyzing inter-organizational coordination of food safety issues, despite their weakness as regards measuring uncertainty. According to Andersen (1997, p. 16), '*control of undesired variation*' may be achieved by employing a systematic approach, thus approximating the experimental design. However, this is difficult in practice. One particular challenge arises if the country being studied suddenly introduces reforms or major structural changes that '*disturb*' the experimental design. This is clearly illustrated by the example of

New Zealand. A researcher can-not control this element, because a researcher should operate independently of political decisions.

This dissertation identifies several factors that promote inter-organizational coordination: a clear division of labour, meeting arenas, common goals, active leadership, positive attitudes/obligations and geographical distance/IT systems. The use of these factors requires reflection on the theoretical strategy employed. Theoretical perspectives can serve different purposes, and may sometimes function as analytical ‘lenses’, rather than offer testable and contrasting theoretical expectations. However, in this dissertation, a ‘contrasting’ strategy has been employed to choose from among a set of theories tested on data gathered through two empirical case studies. The contrasting strategy seeks ‘to choose among alternative theories based on assessment of their explanatory power’ (Roness 2009, p. 52). In the context of this dissertation, greater insight into inter-organizational coordination requires clearly formulated expectations based on the theoretical perspectives. Expressing theoretical expectations clearly ensures that they are distinguished from each other, and allows identification of the one theoretical perspective that has greater relative explanatory power than the other theoretical perspectives.

A contrasting strategy is easier to perform in theory than in practice. It requires contradictory predictions, where the theoretical perspectives have different, preferably opposite predictions. Using contradictory predictions to understand food safety coordination is a complex matter. Coordination has various important features, such as discussions, exchange of information and decision-making. These features may be linked to more than one theoretical perspective. For example, coordination may require a combination of both *formal* decision-making and *informal* discussions. To identify contradictory expectations was possible for some, but not all, factors affecting inter-organizational coordination, as outcomes could be explained partly by more than one of the theoretical perspectives. This

situation causes a challenge. Moreover, context may vary from country to country, and a factor may be more important in one particular country due to these contextual features. Findings must, therefore, always be analyzed by reference to context, something which makes comparison across countries, such as Norway and New Zealand, challenging for the researcher.

Accordingly, ‘complementing’ may be a more useful strategy for researching inter-organizational coordination than ‘contrasting’. Both the instrumental-hierarchical perspective and the institutional-cultural perspective explain various findings detailed in this dissertation with regard to Norway post-2004 reform and the New Zealand post-2007 reform. The instrumental-negotiation perspective explains the New Zealand findings relating to the period 2002–2007. Different theoretical perspectives may thus explain findings linked to different time periods as well as different factors preventing or promoting coordination.

However, the institutional-myth perspective does not explain many of the findings at all. Should the theory therefore be rejected? In this dissertation, ‘testing’ a theory does not mean rejecting it. Rather, testing helps the researcher to identify the conditions under which the theory has explanatory power, and to specify the strength of that power (George and Bennett 2005, p. 115). The core message in the institutional-myth perspective is that organizations need to handle ideas coming from the institutional environment. The environment may exert external pressure on organizations to implement certain solutions (Meyer and Rowan 1977; DiMaggio and Powel 1983). Even though many countries have established food safety agencies, affiliation with parent ministries varies from country to country. Some countries have one parent ministry, and others may have several parent ministries responsible for one food safety agency. Several countries have in the 2000s focused on inter-organizational coordination in the state sector.

An important question is therefore under which conditions this perspective could have provided a solid explanation? One condition is that organizations with an influence in the institutional food-safety environment, such as the EU and the WTO, should have issued guidance on the organization of inter-organizational processes. However, these institutions seldom issue such guidance. Rather, such institutions seek to influence the content of decisions made in food-safety processes. All of this suggests that the institutional-myth perspective is more relevant to the *content* of national decisions than to the *organization* of inter-organizational coordination processes (Rykkja 2008b, pp. 90–91).

8.9 Conclusions – main findings from the two cases

This chapter has compared the food safety reforms in New Zealand (2002, 2007 and 2010) to the food safety reform in Norway (2004). At the same time these food safety reforms have been compared to general reforms in the two countries. Norway and New Zealand have selected rather different organizational solutions of food safety issues. In Norway, three ministries have professional responsibility for a national food safety agency, the NFSA, while in New Zealand food safety issues have recently been merged with agricultural issues and placed in the MAF. Today, the NZFSA has become a department within the MAF in New Zealand.

This dissertation shows that food safety issues are cross-cutting issues that span different organizational boundaries. Handling food safety issues can therefore potentially be attached to various organizations, and will for this reason often require inter-organizational coordination of several organizations. Therefore, a study of the organization of food safety issues provides insights into how inter-organizational coordination is organized as well as how it operates in practice.

Organizations generally experience two main challenges that can cause inter-organizational coordination problems. First, *inter-organizational* coordination is generally more challenging than *intra-organizational* coordination. It therefore requires greater effort to ensure inter-organizational coordination than intra-organizational coordination. Second, horizontal inter-organizational coordination is generally more challenging than vertical inter-organizational coordination. Such vertical inter-organizational coordination often involves a superior organization that formally has the right to instruct a subordinate organization, by contrast to horizontal inter-organizational coordination. These challenges will be difficult but not impossible to handle. To overcome these challenges the involved leaders can make use of various efforts. Such efforts have been discussed throughout this dissertation.

The comparison of the food safety reform in Norway (2004) and New Zealand (2002) showed a potentially interesting paradox: Less conflict should be observed when a food safety agency is attached to just one ministry as in New Zealand at that time, than under the three-ministry organizational structure in Norway. By contrast, the study showed that the reform has had positive effects on inter-organizational coordination in Norway, while New Zealand on the other hand has struggled with coordination challenges due to a complex accountability framework. Several factors worked to overcome important challenges in the inter-organizational coordination processes in Norway.

The comparison of the food safety reform in Norway (2004) and New Zealand (2007) showed several points: On the one hand, by creating a ministry it seemed paradoxical that New Zealand should introduce a more challenging inter-organizational structure in 2007 than that implemented through the 2002 reform. On the other hand, such horizontal inter-organizational coordination processes worked quite well in Norway after 2004. However, even though horizontal inter-organizational coordination may be more challenging than vertical inter-organizational coordination, the food safety reform in 2007 eliminated the

confusing accountability framework in the 2002 reform. Although the new reform in 2007 solved some challenges, it also created new ones. The interviews showed that inter-organizational coordination worked quite well in New Zealand between the MAF and the NZFSA, but that some challenges existed. Handling this, for example, a leader from the NZFSA spent some time within the MAF to ensure better inter-organizational coordination.

The 2010 reform in New Zealand seems paradoxical given the premise that inter-organizational coordination between the MAF and the NZFSA worked quite well since 2007. The analysis showed, however, that the initiative came from *outside* the two organizations. In addition, reforms may often be implemented due to problems or challenges, and organizations find structural change to be a relevant option to solve such problems or challenges. However, reforms may also be implemented for other reasons, such as increasing legitimacy in the environment or reducing costs within the state sector. The three reforms implemented in New Zealand illustrates that reforms frequently solve some problems, but simultaneously also create new ones.

This dissertation used a strategy based on contrasting. Such a strategy requires that the theoretical perspectives have different, preferably opposite predictions. However, this is not easy in practice, because coordination is a complex concept involving several features that can be coupled to various organizational perspectives. For example, coordination may involve formal decisions (the instrumental-hierarchical perspective), informal communication (the institutional-cultural perspective), negotiations (the instrumental-negotiation perspective) and symbols (the institutional-myth perspective). Since important coordination features are linked to more than one theoretical perspective, ‘complementing’ may be a more relevant strategy than ‘contrasting’. An eclectic approach, based on ‘complementing’, seems to give the most fruitful understanding of inter-organizational coordination.

Still, rather than saying that one theoretical perspective explains the empirical findings and that the others do not, it may be important to evaluate the relative importance of various theoretical perspectives. Such an evaluation shows that the instrumental-hierarchical perspective and the institutional-cultural perspective provide important insights into inter-organizational coordination. The instrumental-negotiation perspective also provides important insights, but to less of a degree than the first two theoretical perspectives. In contrast, the institutional-myth perspective does explain least in this dissertation.

9 Appendices

9.1 Interview guide Norway

- 1) How clear is the division of labour between the MHCS, the MAF, and the MFCA?

Following implementation of the reform programme, has consideration been given to changing or adjusting the division of labour between the ministries?

- 2) In your opinion, have the goals of the reform programme been achieved?
- 3) Has the food safety reform programme ensured greater efficiency? How is this measured?
- 4) A primary objective of the reform programme was to ensure that clearer distinctions were made between professional, political and administrative issues. Has this been achieved? If so, what has changed?
- 5) To what extent do the three ministries adopt different approaches to ensuring professional management of the NFSA?
- 6) The reform programme distinguished between risk assessment and risk management. How do you view the NFSA in this respect? How do you view the three ministries in this respect? Under what conditions may the ministries instruct the NFSA in relation to risk management issues?
- 7) The NFSA is both a directorate and an inspectorate. To what extent do the ministries give guidance on these two functions? Are there any similarities or differences between the respective sets of guidance? Have the ministries given the NFSA instructions on one or both of these functions?
- 8) How much autonomy does the NFSA have from the three ministries?

- 9) What factors influence coordination processes between the ministries? Has the reform altered those factors? How have the processes affected coordination (weak, strong, medium, no change)? Has the reform affected trust between the ministries?
- 10) How frequently do the ministries meet to discuss food safety issues related to the NFSA? What kinds of actors meet? At what level? Formal/informal meetings? How do these meetings work in practice? Is one leader responsible for these meetings, or are there several leaders?
- 11) How often do the ministries and the NFSA meet? What kinds of actors meet? How many? At what hierarchical level? Formal/informal meetings? One leader or several leaders responsible for these meetings?
- 12) Each of the three ministries has professional and political responsibility for the NFSA. In addition, one of the ministries, the MAF, has administrative responsibility. To what extent does the NFSA experience tension between the ministries in relation to professional, administrative and political issues?
- 13) Does the NFSA experience differences between the ministries' approaches to business issues and health issues?
- 14) After the E. coli crisis, the NFSA implemented several structural changes. What are the positive and negative aspects of these changes?
- 15) The food safety reform programme involved the merger of several inspection bodies and agencies into a single agency, the NFSA. Have the leaders of the NFSA done anything to build a new culture?
- 16) How did the NFSA resolve the E. coli crisis? An independent group that investigated the crisis examined the division of labour and responsibilities between the ministries and the agency. Did the report provide an accurate picture of the actions taken? How

did the ministries handle the crisis? How clear was the division of labour between them?

- 17) Which ministry maintains the most active contact with the NFSA? Are there any differences between the ministries in this regard?

9.2 Interview guide New Zealand

- 1) What do you see as the main advantages of separating the New Zealand Food Safety Authority from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry? Do you see any disadvantages?
- 2) What was the main problem with the SAB (semi-autonomous body) model when the New Zealand Food Safety Authority was attached to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry? Do you see any advantages of the SAB model?
- 3) The state sector in New Zealand focuses on whole-of-government and reintegration of the state sector. How does the separation of the New Zealand Food Safety Authority from the Ministry of Agriculture fit into this picture?
- 4) An official committee on food safety has been established to promote a whole-of-government approach. Its members have been drawn from various ministries. How is coordination within this committee working? Is there high coordination, low coordination, or something in-between?
- 5) How frequently do civil servants from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the New Zealand Food Safety Authority and MAF Biosecurity New Zealand meet? Who attends meetings? At what level do these meetings take place?
- 6) Is your impression that these organizations pull in the same direction? Do they speak with one voice, domestically and internationally? How consistent are their actions?

How would you describe the level of coordination? In your opinion, is there high coordination, low coordination, or something in-between?

- 7) Are the meetings between the NZFSA and the MAF (in relation to both policy and biosecurity), formal, informal or both? If informal meetings take place, do you consider them to conflict with the formal meetings, or do they supplement them?
- 8) How would you describe the culture within these organizations? Do they have different cultures? How does the culture affect coordination? Is there any sign of tension between the organizations?
- 9) The New Zealand Food Safety Authority simultaneously promotes public health, economic growth and market access. Do you see any tensions or contradictions between these objectives? Has the balance between them been stable over time?
- 10) The New Zealand Food Safety Authority is not attached to the Ministry of Health, but there are links between them. How does this work in practice?
- 11) Has there been any discussion in New Zealand about increasing the involvement of the Ministry of Health in food safety issues or giving it responsibility for the New Zealand Food Safety Authority?
- 12) An independent Food Safety Advisory Board was established in 2003 to ensure, among other things, that attention was paid to health interests. How has the Advisory Board managed this task? Has its organization changed since the separation?
- 13) The SPS forum and the SPS coordination group are important bodies in the New Zealand food safety regime. How are they organized? Who attends meetings? At what level do these meetings take place? Have any changes been made to these groups since the separation? Do they primarily make decisions, or do they primarily share information?

- 14) The New Zealand Food Safety Authority is made up of several business groups.
How are these groups interacting? How frequently do their leaders meet? Do you feel that the groups are moving in the same direction? How would you describe the degree of coordination between the groups?
- 15) A new food act will be introduced in 2008. What is new about this act?
- 16) New Zealand has adopted a risk-based approach. Are risk assessment and risk-management kept separate? Are risk assessments in New Zealand undertaken by a risk committee that is independent of the Food Safety Authority?
- 17) In your opinion, do the NZFSA, MAF Biosecurity New Zealand and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry have the same view and focus on risk management?
- 18) How is food safety organized at regional and local level in New Zealand? Do you have district offices throughout the country to undertake food inspections?
- 19) What are the main values of the New Zealand Food Safety Authority? How important is values-based management?
- 20) Has there been tension within the New Zealand Food Safety Authority between different professions with different educational backgrounds?
- 21) How has the separation of the New Zealand Food Safety Authority from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry affected the role of the minister? Do you think that the scope for ministerial steering has increased, or has the separation not made any difference?
- 22) The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the New Zealand Food Safety Authority share many services. How does this work in practice?
- 23) Has there been much debate between the political parties in New Zealand regarding the organization of food safety issues?

- 24) Do you have any examples of food safety incidents where many people have fallen ill here in New Zealand?
- 25) How often does the New Zealand Food Safety Authority participate in the Codex Committees, and in which committees does it participate? Who represents the New Zealand Food Safety Authority? How often does the NZFSA attend WTO meetings? Who represents the NZFSA?
- 26) Is it possible to obtain a copy of 'the Scott report'?
- 27) Has the separation of NZFSA from MAF affected trust between the two organizations? And how is the degree of trust in your opinion? (High, medium, or low?)
- 28) Has the separation of NZFSA from MAF affected either the number of meetings and/or the hierarchical level of these meetings? And how do you consider the degree of coordination now versus before the separation?

9.3 Interview respondents Norway

Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs (MFCA)

Secretary General Jørn Krog

Director General Magnor Nerheim

State Secretary Vidar Ulriksen

Former Political Adviser Kari-Anne Opsal

Ministry of Health and Care Services (MHC)

Secretary General Anne Kari Lande Hasle

Director General Jon-Olav Aspås

Assistant Director General Kjetil Tveitan

Senior Adviser Halvard Kvamsdal

Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF)

Former Secretary General Per Harald Grue

Former Deputy Director General Hege Nygård Wetland

Deputy Director General Steinar Svanemyr

Former Political Adviser Sigrid Hjørnegård

Former Minister Lars Sponheim

Deputy Director General Stein Ivar Ormsettrø

Deputy Director General Gunnar Hagen

The Norwegian Food Safety Authority

Chief Executive Joakim Lystad

Director Jarleif Nordheim

Director Kari Bryhni

9.4 Interview respondents New Zealand

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)

Director General Murray Sherwi (e-mail interview)

Deputy Director General Larry Fergusson

Deputy Director General Dr Paul Reynolds

The New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA)

Director Sandra Daly

Director Carole Inkster

Director Debbie Morris

Director Steve Gilbert

Director Carol Barnao

Chief Executive Andrew McKenzie (e-mail interview)

Ministry of Health (MoH)

Group Manager Graeme Gillespie

Director Dr Mark Jacobs

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